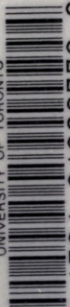


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LIFE AND TIMES

OF

SIR ROBERT PEEL.

BY

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SIR ROBERT PEEL:

HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

CONSEQUENCES OF CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION.

THE sudden termination of a struggle, which under one form or another had lasted nearly three centuries; the abandonment of the principle of Protestant ascendancy, which had been long almost universally regarded as the basis on which the British government was placed by the Revolution of 1688, produced a paralyzing effect on the public mind, and it was long before men began again to evince any interest in the political events of the day. Peel's old friends, alienated by what they considered his desertion, stood aloof; the Whigs gave the government a general, but hollow support; and the small but important body which went by the name of Canning's friends, began to evince greater sympathies for the opposition than for the ministry. The cabinet itself was weakly constructed: Wellington and Peel were the only members of it who inspired general respect; Lords Bathurst, Rosslyn, Melville, and Ellenborough, were regarded as little

better than ciphers; Herries was generally disliked; Goulburn was not revered; and Sir George Murray was represented as a mere aid-de-camp of the military premier. There remained only Lord Lyndhurst, then more esteemed as a lawyer than as a politician; Lord Aberdeen, whose management of Foreign Affairs gave little satisfaction; and Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, who displayed great activity and intelligence as President of the Board of Trade. Among the street-songs of the day, was rather a clever parody on an old ballad, designed to express the popular opinion of the composition of the ministry, which was sung by the itinerant ballad-venders in every part of London. The two first verses of this satirical squib will give a sufficient notion of its merits:—

“ When Arthur first at court began
To laugh in Treasury sleeves,
He entertained nine serving-men,
The whole of whom were thieves.

One-third of them were paltry slaves,
One-third of them were flats,
One-third of them were arrant knaves,
And all of them were rats.”

Most of the leading Tory journals directed their chief vengeance against Peel; he was ridiculed and assailed, in magazines, reviews, and newspapers, with a bitterness and pertinacity which seemed to belong more to personal than to political hostility. His origin, his rejection at Oxford, and his abandonment of the cause by the support of which he had gained power, furnished materials for a series of attacks less remarkable for their wit than their malice; and though he met no formidable opposition in the House, his influence was sadly damaged in the country.

Although the resistance which George IV. had offered to Catholic Emancipation was weak and passionate, he did not

the less feel a bitter resentment against those who had extorted his consent to the measure. At the levee he treated with marked coldness all those who had voted in its favour, and with still more marked friendship those who had opposed it to the last. He acted as if he stood too much in awe of the Duke of Wellington to exhibit angry feeling towards him, and as if he had resolved to compensate for this restraint by taking vengeance on his subordinates. Peel had never been a favourite at Windsor; he was now rather notoriously disliked, and seems to have been regarded by the king as a very disagreeable political necessity.

It was a pretty general opinion that Peel was disposed to coalesce with the Whigs, and was only prevented from adopting this course by his attachment to the Duke of Wellington; the Whigs themselves seemed to expect such an accession to their ranks; more than one of their journals addressed to him the indirect and classic invitation *Quoniam talis sis, Utinam noster esses!* But many causes impeded a union equally desirable for the parties and the country. Though the Wellington party, properly so called, was weak, the duke not unreasonably hoped that the anger of the Tories would wear out, and that they would soon return back to his standard; on the other hand, Peel, who was bent on becoming premier, had reason to apprehend that so aristocratic a party as the Whigs would not submit to be led by the son of a manufacturer. He might indeed have thrown himself upon the middle classes, and formed a mercantile and manufacturing party, to which time would yearly have given additional strength, and made parliamentary reform an adjunct to Catholic emancipation. But reform at the moment did not seem to engage public attention; there were no meetings and no petitions on the subject, the "three glorious days" of July had not yet come.

Though the country generally had evinced much apathy

on the Catholic question, the mode in which it had been carried greatly weakened Peel's popularity. A minister who confesses that he has yielded to intimidation is sure to become unpopular; the vulgar phrase, "Peel has no pluck!" which was on every tongue, declared him wanting in that quality which Englishmen prize above all others. Obstinate himself, John Bull is not easily disposed to pardon inconsistency in others; and the intemperate speeches of some of the Catholic leaders in Dublin had excited English prejudice and pugnacity not disinclined to seek "a fair stand-up fight" as the most conclusive way of settling the matter.

It was at this time that the Home Secretary laid daring hands on an institution as venerable in the eyes of many as the church itself—the system of watch-and-ward in the metropolis. This sacred system was indeed as bad as it well could be: feeble old men and discarded servants paraded the streets with pole and lantern, calling out the hour of the night and the state of the weather, so as to give all improper characters due warning of their approach; while the guardians of the day were bound to wear flaring red waistcoats, so as to be recognizable by thieves at the greatest possible distance. Parts of London were in fact as perilous to travellers, as the disturbed districts of Tipperary; and the *Quarterly Review* exclaimed in despair—"that the whole existing watch-system of London should be mercilessly struck to the ground." In 1828, a select committee was appointed to inquire into the subject; and its report proved that, without some change, life or property could not be deemed secure in the metropolis.

On the 15th of April, Mr. Peel, as Home Secretary, introduced a bill for the establishment of a Metropolitan Police Force. In the House he had little opposition to fear, but out of doors a cry had already been raised that the Duke of Wellington's military government was about to introduce

into England the despotic police of the Continental states, with all the detestable details of espionage and domestic interference. There were some who asserted that the adoption of police precautions for protection was a direct interference with the order of Providence; there were others who regarded watchmen as an essential part of the Protestant constitution, and who mysteriously shook their heads, as they hinted that there was something ominous in the abolition of watchmen and the emancipation of Catholics in the course of the same year!

Peel introduced the measure in a clever speech, part of which we extract:—

“I am desirous, now that the attention of the House and the public is no longer directed to a subject which has so long excited the warmest feeling, and the most anxious solicitude, of all classes of his majesty’s subjects, both Catholic and Protestant, of leading the House to the consideration of a topic of considerable interest as respects the preservation of the rights of property, as well as the protection of the persons of his majesty’s subjects. I am about to draw your attention to the state of the criminal jurisprudence of this country, and that of the existing police established for the prevention of crime, as well as its detection. It must be in the recollection of the House, that committees of the House had been appointed to investigate this subject as early as the year 1770, and again in 1793. Committees also were appointed in 1812, 1818, 1822, and lastly in 1828. These different committees were the result of alarm at some remarkable or unprecedented outrage at the time; or the effect, perhaps, of a general conviction, that crimes and offences against the peace of society were so much on the increase, as to require an increase and corresponding vigour on the part of our police, with a view to protect the public, and prescribe more effectual remedies

for its preservation. But, unfortunately, those committees, however their reports might be creditable to the labours and investigation of the individuals who composed them, produced no effect in improving the law materially: and the subject was lost sight of, almost as soon as the cause of the recent alarm had subsided. No effectual measure, therefore, was recommended by the committees, or adopted at the suggestion of individuals in parliament.

“Whoever has read the reports of those committees, particularly those of later date, will find the state of our police to be most defective. It has been pretty clearly ascertained, that it is altogether unsafe, and that it has been so for a long period, to commit the care of the lives and properties of the people of the metropolis and its vicinity to the charge of the parochial watch, during that part of the twenty-four hours which constituted the object of their very lax and inefficient protection. I might rest my case on the report of the police committee which lies on the table, and which clearly shows the necessity for some alteration in the existing means for the prevention and detection of crime; but I think it will be more satisfactory to the House and the public, to state generally the grounds upon which I feel myself imperatively called upon to induce the House to abandon the present system of protecting property and guarding the safety of the person. If we compare the state of crime in the metropolis with that in other parts of the country, or in England and Wales at large, the result would be very unfavourable to the former. If, for example, we select the last year, and calculate the proportion which the number of criminals in London and Middlesex bear to the population, we shall find that not less than one person in every three hundred and eighty-three had been committed for some crime or other in 1828. If in the same manner we determine the ratio between the number of persons

similarly committed in England and Wales, the proportion would be found to be one criminal to every eight hundred and twenty-two of the entire population. The result of a comparison of both, as I have stated, would be very unfavourable to the metropolis. It may be said, perhaps, that a different ratio of increase of population in London and Middlesex, and the country at large, would account for this difference in the amount of crime; but an examination would show, that the great increase of crime in the former could not be explained by the increased number of its inhabitants. Neither, I am sorry also to say, would the result be favourable to the metropolis, were we to compare its present amount of crime with that of any other period, or compared either with that of other parts of the country."

He gave a very clever sketch of the then existing system, principally derived from the evidence given before the select committee—evidence sufficient to convince all rational people that the state of the watch in London and the metropolitan districts was a disgrace to any civilized community—and dwelt with great force on the necessity of abolishing such a nuisance. In conclusion, he thus replied to what he supposed would probably be the chief ground of opposition to the new bill.

"In one respect, perhaps, objections will be taken to this measure, on the ground of its exciting jealousy on the part of the existing parochial authorities, in consequence of its transferring the patronage which at present vests in their hands, to this department, acting under the control of the Secretary of State. For my part, I cannot conceive what valid objection can be urged against the power which would be derived from this patronage to government, more than to that which results from the selection of persons for the army and navy. Certain I am, that from the class of persons who would be chosen under such a system, for any jealousy

which might be entertained by parochial authorities in reference to the loss of this petty patronage, there would be found an ample compensation in the increased protection which would be afforded against offenders, and in the increased security given to the inhabitants for the preservation of the peace and tranquillity of their respective neighbourhoods. But the subject must be considered and determined upon higher and more extended principles, than in reference to these petty parochial jealousies. When we look to the relative proportion which the criminals bear to the population in this metropolis—when we see that one out of every three hundred and fifty-three of that population is committed to prison, charged with some criminal offence, it is our duty under such circumstances to legislate upon principles of a higher and more extended nature, and to adopt effectual means to put a stop to such a frightful increase of crime.

“But, it may be said, that this measure would go to impose additional burdens upon the inhabitants of the various parishes. It is true that a certain degree of expense will be required to carry it fully into effect; but I am sure that any additional burden imposed in this way would be fully compensated for by the additional protection and security which it would afford. Besides, one certain effect of the measure would be to diminish the number of prosecutions in Middlesex and London; and thus, while the inhabitants would be relieved from the watch-box, they would also be relieved from other parochial rates, which had been materially increased by the expense and number of those prosecutions. But I will rest the defence of this measure upon a much higher consideration,—upon its effects in checking the increase of crime. I see no mode by which we can hope ultimately to mitigate the severity of our criminal code, but the adoption of some such measure as this for preventing the increase of crime. It would be vain

for us to attempt to mitigate the penalties which attach to crime already, unless we take measures to prevent the commission of crime itself. If, as it appeared from the documents upon the table, the number of criminals in the year 1821 amounted to two thousand five hundred, if they have increased in 1828 to three thousand five hundred; and if they are going on at such a rapidly increasing ratio—it will be obviously impossible, unless some check is put to their increase, to effect any material mitigation in the penalties which, under the existing laws, attached to the commission of crime.

“I am not one who considers that this increase of criminals has been mainly occasioned by the increase of distress among the population. I believe that these criminals are, in almost all instances, trained and hardened profligates—that they have been incited to the commission of crime by the temptations which the present lax system of police holds out to them; and I am sure it is possible eventually to check them, by the vigorous exercise of the powers supplied by the common law of the land. I have already referred the house to an instance, in which nineteen acts of burglary were committed in the parish of Tottenham, within an exceedingly short space of time; and I may now state, that these burglarious attempts were committed by notorious thieves, who made burglary a profession. When, therefore, we talk so much of the liberty of the subject possessed by the people of this country, I am afraid that we give credit to some parts of the population for the enjoyment of much more liberty than they actually possess. I believe that a large portion of the inhabitants resident in the neighbourhood of Twickenham and Brentford, were under constant apprehensions that their lives and properties would be attacked; and such fears are entirely inconsistent with the free enjoyment of liberty and peace. It is the duty of the legislature to afford them protection against the causes which give rise to such apprehen-

sions,—it is the duty of parliament to afford to the inhabitants of the metropolis and its vicinity, the full and complete protection of the law, and to take prompt and decisive measures to check the increase of crime, which is now proceeding at a frightfully rapid pace ; and it is upon such grounds, with such objects, and for the purpose of providing a more efficient police for the metropolis, that I now beg to move for ‘leave to bring in a bill for the improvement of the police of the metropolis.’”

Although this measure was almost unopposed in parliament, it was bitterly assailed by some of the newspapers, and in a few pamphlets long since forgotten. One of these deserved to be preserved from oblivion on account of its unrivalled absurdity ; it was entitled an “Address to the King,” and bore the Hebrew signature, *Ebed-Melek-Melek*, which signifies “a servant of the king of the king.” It called on George IV. “to awake in the name of the eternal God, and rally his people round his throne,” because a plot had been formed to set aside the House of Hanover, and raise the Duke of Wellington to the throne by the aid of the Irish Catholics about to be enrolled in the new police. This extravagance defeated its own object ; those who disliked the measure, chose rather to acquiesce than to be deemed partakers in the insanity of *Ebed-Melek-Melek*.

Although the Catholic question and other measures connected with Ireland, almost wholly engrossed the attention of parliament in the session of 1829, the distressed condition of the silk-weavers and other manufacturing classes, gave rise to some important debates, in which the merits of the system of “Protection to British Industry,” were very closely canvassed. The distress of the operatives was aggravated by their combining in many places to remain idle, rather than work at the rate of wages which was offered them ; and their “strikes” led to frequent riotous proceedings, and to the destruction of the property of their employers. The

silk-weavers of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green, particularly distinguished themselves in this work of violence ; which in some instances, was secretly encouraged by manufacturers, who feared that their productions could not compete with the silks of France.

We have already mentioned Mr. Huskisson's honourable exertions to abolish the prohibitory and protective systems, and gradually to establish the principles of Free Trade ; his successors in office continued to advance in the same direction, though they thus exposed themselves to the hostility of several of their partisans who were interested in the support of different monopolies ; the distress of the silk trade, though it was as severely felt in France as in England, afforded an apparent case against Huskisson's system of political economy ; speeches were delivered, and countless pamphlets written, to prove that a return to the prohibitory system was absolutely necessary to the salvation of the country, as otherwise its most profitable branches of industry would pass into the hands of foreigners. Mr. Tyler, the member for Coventry, moved that a select committee should be appointed to inquire into the condition of the silk trade, and the causes of its depression. This motion was rejected by a majority of 149, against 31 ; and then the President of the Board of Trade proposed the reduction of the duties on thrown silk, which to the weavers was virtually raw material, as the only expedient by which good could be effected. He was strongly opposed by the advocates of protection and prohibition, who were led by Mr. M. T. Sadler, the member for Newark, who had written some forgotten pamphlets to prove that monopolies were essential to national prosperity. As Mr. Sadler was then regarded as the best advocate of protection, and as his authority is still invoked by those who cling to exclusive systems, a portion of the speech he delivered on the silk trade deserves to be quoted as an index to the slow

but gradual growth of sound opinion on commercial affairs in this country :—

“The evils which I apprehended in consequence of their commercial policy are, I fear, in the course of being realized. The few may be, and probably are served ; but the many are injured ; profitable industry is crippled, and growing more and more languid ; the resources of the country, whether individual or public, I fear, are not at present in a very prosperous state ; labour is becoming daily more redundant, and its remuneration is perpetually diminishing.

“But I will not pursue the distressing subject. I will merely ask, to what are these melancholy results attributable? Not to the country—not to its people—not to Providence! We have been already blessed with a long continuance of peace. The bounties of nature have flowed in upon us with an equal and unfailing stream. Our climate is still propitious—our plains fertile—our people active and enterprising, beyond all rivalry—our possessions, unequalled in wealth, and all but unbounded in extent. To what, then, are these distresses, which take, I fear, a wider range than we are now contemplating, attributable? At one time, they have been laid to the charge of too much capital ; at another, to too little. Now, over-production was the cause—now, stagnation of commercial enterprise ;—now, the bankers were in fault—now, the landlords. I shall not dwell upon these conjectures, believing them all to be erroneous. Sir, I assert seriously, that I believe the distress that has been at shortening intervals long assailing different branches of national industry, and which I now fear is threatening all, is owing to the application of the principles of free trade to a country placed in a situation in which it has only another term for national difficulty, distress, and ultimate confusion. By husbanding our resources, protecting our labour, and developing our mighty and incalculable means, we have within our-

selves the elements of prosperity. So, it is my belief, has every country under heaven. There may not, indeed, be everywhere the same signs of greatness, the display of equal wealth, the exhibition of the like grandeur, yet there is, in every place which God and nature have formed, the constituents of internal happiness and prosperity. In the universal mechanism of the social system, of which necessity is the main spring, all the parts are so adequately and necessarily balanced, especially those of labour and demand, population and production, that nothing but a deviation from the dictates of sound policy and true benevolence, can ever disturb or destroy its harmonious movements. In a word, we owe to each other and to our country, those reciprocal duties, the discharge of which is invariably their own reward, is at once the security and the consummation of all happiness and prosperity, individual, social, or national. But, sir, if the interest before the House is regarded as an exception from the general line of policy it may adopt in other instances, let that plead for a deliberate reconsideration of its pressing claims. Let those who conceive that the main branches of English industry require no protection, still extend it to this; seeing that it has hitherto always experienced the favourable consideration of the legislature, and is now claiming its particular attention, on account of its present weakness and distress. Let them console the sufferings of those that approach them on this occasion by hearing their appeal and granting their request. Even if concession should not bring relief, it will bestow comfort—it will preserve peace. Let the legislature of the country then consult its proper character—let it assume that in which it would wish to appear before a confiding public—let it exhibit itself in the attitude of a kind parent, who, while exulting in the strength and vigour of his elder born, still extends his fostering care to the young and helpless branches of his family; and who,

lending his patient ear and his soothing voice to their complaints, half removes the sorrow which he is perhaps unable wholly to cure, in the very act of commiserating it.

“Sir, I earnestly implore this House to negative the present bill, and to consult those deeply concerned in the present question, in the framing one which will protect their long-cherished interests, and preserve to them their bread, and with that the peace of the community, as well as its prosperity, which I think is seriously threatened by the measure before the House. In conclusion, I disclaim any intention of using harsh or intemperate language, or of applying offensive terms to any of the members of his majesty’s government; and particularly to the right honourable the President of the Board of Trade. I should be quite satisfied, if the distressed silk manufacturers were left to the good feeling of the right honourable gentleman, but I fear he is persevering in a wrong course for the sake of consistency, when a much nobler course is open to him.”

These arguments made little impression on the House, but they tended to strenghten the delusions of Trades-Unions in the country. Their fallacy may be shown in a moment—supposing the extreme case of the protectionists true—that we imported all our silks from France, and paid for them in gold; the silks employed indeed the labour of France, but the gold came from South America, and was there purchased by British woollens and other manufactured goods. So that, on Mr. Sadler’s own showing, it was a barter of labour for labour, in which the British artisan had his fair share.

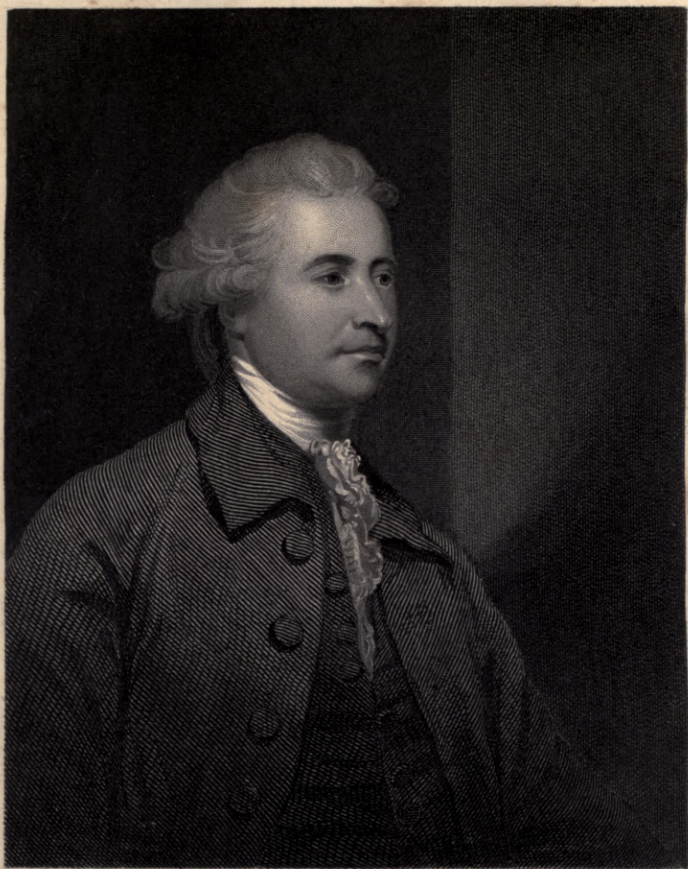
The question of reform in parliament was again incidentally discussed in connection with the disfranchisement of East Retford; the moderate reformers proposed that the representation should be transferred to some large town; the old Tory party insisted that the franchise should merely be extended to the neighbouring hundred of Bassetlaw. Mr.

Secretary Peel took the latter view of the case, and thus severed himself from the Whigs and reformers who had supported him so zealously during the struggle for Catholic emancipation. His speech on the occasion was one of his least judicious efforts, but it had too important a bearing on his future career, to be omitted:—

“This case is so exactly the same as that which was discussed last session at such length, and in such repeated details, that I can relieve the House from the fatigue of listening to me at any length upon this occasion. I must however say that, notwithstanding the surprise and regret of my right honourable friend who has last spoken, at the course which I am about to take, I cannot see any cause for it, since I am merely supporting the resolution of the House of Commons of last year, under what appears to me very similar circumstances. In return for this expression of astonishment, my right honourable friend must allow me to give way to some surprise at a few of the observations which have just fallen from him. I must be allowed to divest myself of all credit for that general horror for reform which my right honourable friend has imputed to me, as well as of some of the arguments in support of reform, with which he seems disposed to invest me. Indeed, from certain expressions of my right honourable friend, it is obvious that the noble marquis opposite ought to depend upon my right honourable friend’s vote, when he brings forward his general motion on the state of the representation. My right honourable friend appears to have been particularly struck with the quotation so often repeated—

‘... Simul alba nautis
Stella refulsit,
Defluit saxis agitatus humor,
Concidunt venti, fugiuntque nubes;
Et minax (quod sic voluere) ponto
Unda recumbit.’

And he has applied that splendid passage with which Mr. Burke has illustrated the passing of the Welsh acts, where a new kind of representation is conferred upon general principles, to one where the change is to be expressly founded upon specific delinquency. So that, I repeat, my right honourable friend stands committed for the wider range of reform, at the moment when he thought he was merely enforcing the limited one. He has likewise called to his aid arguments deduced from what he terms the smothered volcano of Ireland, and has asked, do you believe that the settlement of the Catholic question will, without the aid of poor-laws, tranquillize that country? I am not called upon now to say whether it will or not. I see no direct connection between the one and the other; and I cannot help thinking, that he seeks an unfair advantage, in endeavouring to gain arguments against us, from the settlement of a question in which we cordially acted with him. My right honourable friend admits, that we settled it upon more satisfactory terms for all parties, than could have been done under any other circumstances. My right honourable friend next referred to the conduct of the present government, in relation to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; but my right honourable friend seems to have forgotten that I sailed in the same boat with him, and the rest of my right honourable friends, then colleagues. We both equally opposed that repeal, it may be on different grounds—both, in the first stages of that measure, gave it our unequivocal opposition, and both concurred, in the sequel, in effecting a satisfactory adjustment of it. The remarks, therefore, of my right honourable friend, equally apply to his own conduct on that occasion. With respect to what my right honourable friend has said on the subject of parliamentary reform, I can only reply, that I have always, as much, and as readily as my right honourable friend, acted upon the principle of disfranchise-

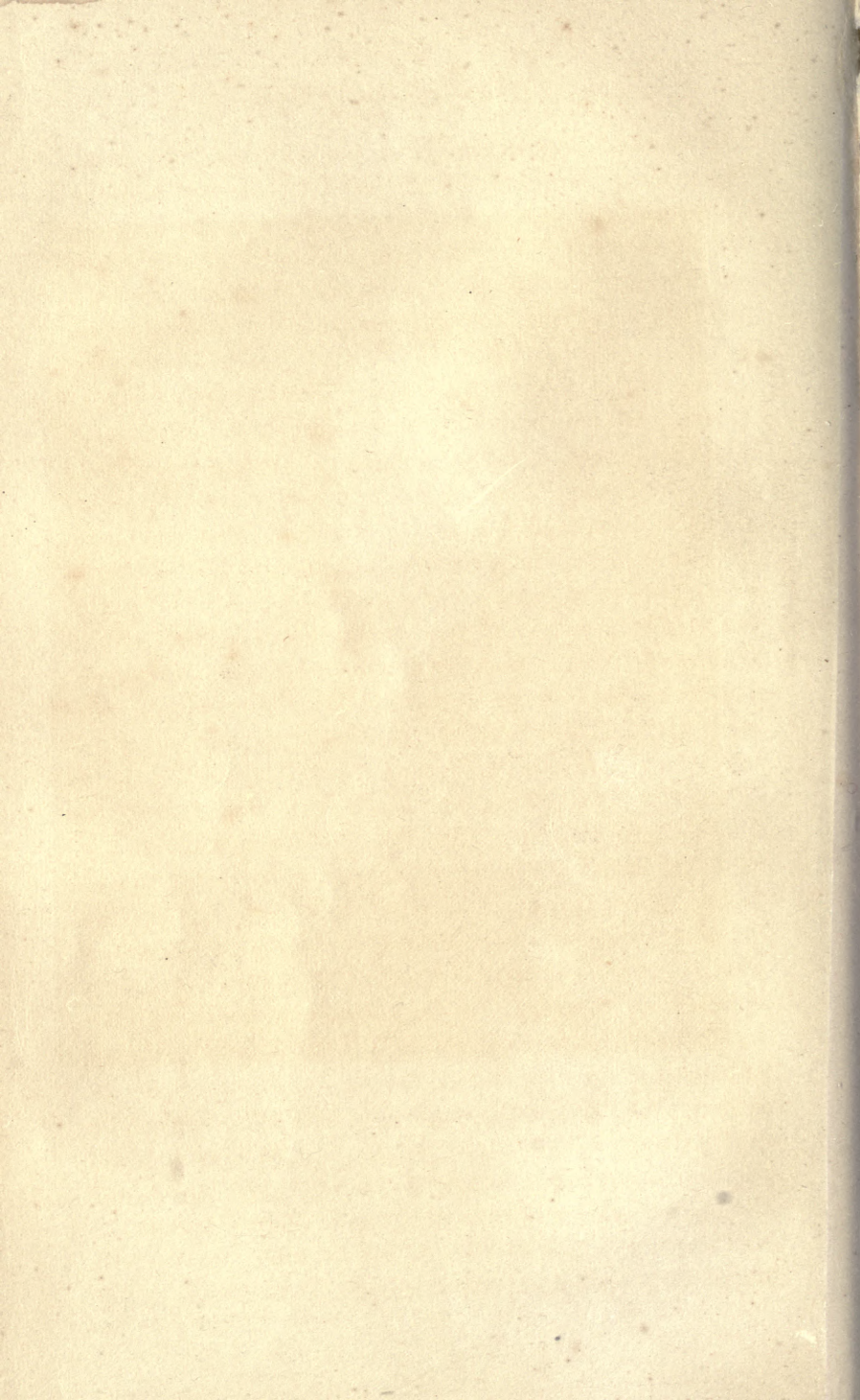


Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Engraved by H. Robinson.

THE RT HONBLE EDMUND BURKE.

Edm Burke



ment, when a clear case of delinquency has been proved against any borough. I dealt with Penryn, for example, on that principle, and voted for the transfer of its franchise. To be sure, there were particular circumstances in the case of Penryn to warrant the vote that has been given respecting it by my right honourable friend and the other members of the government: (hear, hear.) I do not understand the nature of the cheer, but I contend, that a large majority of this House has voted for the transfer of the franchise to Manchester, my right honourable friend nevertheless agreeing with my colleagues in the principle, that the transfer should be made to the adjoining hundred. I see no ground of exception to that principle in favour of East Retford, and therefore cannot adopt the course which my right honourable friend is at present pursuing. I beg leave to remind the House, that, in every case, except Grampound, the principle of transfer to the adjoining hundred is recognized by the highest authorities in that or the other house of parliament—by Lord Chatham, for instance, in the case of Shoreham, which ‘he rejoiced,’ he said, ‘was transferred from India to England.’ Mr. Pitt also contended, that it is an improvement in the elective franchise in those cases to transfer it to the adjacent hundred, without arguing the question—which stands on distinct and different grounds—whether it would be expedient or not to transfer it to a large unfranchised town. Upon the whole, then, I see no reason for departing from the course I have hitherto pursued respecting East Retford. It is true, the House might go further; but that is not the question before it. That question is founded upon the report of its committee; which declares, that corrupt practices have been pursued in that borough at elections, calling for its interference, as in similar preceding cases. It cannot be urged against that interference, that it is unfair because it was made in the

absence of the members of the borough, inasmuch as that absence was at once a consequence and a proof of its corrupt practices. The case of delinquency has been proved against it, therefore it must pay the penalty. With respect to the principle of voting for the transfer of the franchise of delinquent boroughs to the large unrepresented towns, I need not say, I am not opposed to it, having, as I have stated, voted with my right honourable friend for the noble lord's (John Russell's) motion, to transfer the Penryn franchise to Manchester. An honourable gentleman has mistaken what I said on a former occasion respecting the alteration of the present numbers represented by counties. What I said was, that I did not think it expedient to make any reduction in the present numbers, but not that no alteration should be made in them. Nottingham, for example, the county in which East Retford stands, returns eight members; while Warwickshire, in which Birmingham stands, returns but six, but it does not therefore follow that two should be taken from the former, to be added to the latter, however desirable it might be to make such an addition. In conclusion, I repeat, that I see no new ground for voting differently from what I did last session with respect to the transfer of the East Retford franchise. I therefore shall support the proposition of my honourable friend, the member for Hertfordshire, for transferring it to the adjoining hundred of Bassetlaw."

A subject of immense importance, the establishment of a system of Poor-Laws in Ireland, was brought before the House by Mr. Villiers Stuart. It was and is a question beset with complicated difficulties, because the position both of the property and of the population in Ireland is equally anomalous. Mortgages, and rent-charges, and settlements, and leases of lives renewable for ever, and subletting in all its gradations, have rendered it almost impossible to determine that ownership on which the expense of the support of paupers

should properly devolve. No doubt, "property has its duties as well as its rights," but in Ireland it is no easy matter to discover who is in the substantive enjoyment of the rights, because it is he obviously who should be called upon to perform the duties. We know of an estate, the rental of which amounts to twenty thousand a year, the proprietor of which does not receive one thousand annually, the rest being swallowed by mortgages and settlements. Now, how can a man with the rights of only one thousand, perform the duties of twenty thousand pounds? The matter is clearly impossible; and hence every attempt to establish poor-laws in Ireland must fail, if unaccompanied by a stringent measure to substitute a real for a nominal proprietary.

The state of the peasant population presents difficulties equally great, though of a different character. The Irish labourers are for the most part cottiers, paid for their work by the possession of a hovel, and a bit of land; such a system prevents their receiving that employment in tillage and agriculture on which the labourers of England depend. In fact, the Irish peasants are always so near the verge of pauperism, and in fact so far below the tests of pauperism in England, that the poor-laws are liable to be required to provide for the support of three-fourths of the population. All the relations of industry in that country are thoroughly demoralized; and every effort to give a moral character to these relations is sure to be stigmatized as an injury to one class or the other. We can conceive poor-laws beneficially adopted, if accompanied by a despotism which would crush parochial agitations, and rural combinations; but under existing circumstances, we fear that the experiment will not be unattended with danger. Mr. Secretary Peel took this view of the question in 1829, and in his speech will be found the germs of that policy which he has since laboured to develop:

"In voting for the previous question, I do not wish to be

understood as expressing any decided irrevocable opinion as to the principle or the merits of the proposition which had been advocated by the honourable member for Waterford. I shall vote for the previous question, as I much doubt the policy of the House of Commons pledging itself in one session of parliament to pursue any specific course in the next. It will always be open to parliament to adopt the course proposed by the honourable member, without giving any distinct pledge on the subject. There might be circumstances under which it would be right to give such a pledge, in order to allay a ferment, or to subdue the excitement of the moment; but there should exist good and sufficient ground for it, before it was done. Here, however, the case is different. Whenever the House pledges itself to consider the propriety of extending the poor-laws to Ireland, it should at once enter upon that inquiry: in order to allay the ferment and agitation which will naturally take place upon the occasion. I deny that during the last session, I expressed an opinion favourable to the introduction of the poor-laws into Ireland; on the contrary, I then said that I saw great difficulty in the way of introducing them. It was impossible that I could express myself favourable to the introduction of the system, as it existed here, when I did not know what machinery there existed in Ireland for carrying the English poor-laws into operation there. I am certain that if they introduce the system as it at present exists in England into Ireland, if they establish there overseers, parochial vestries, and select vestries, that all this machinery will be converted into a system of local jobbing. The incursions of Irish paupers into England is undoubtedly a great inconvenience and hardship upon the people of this country; and its direct tendency is to reduce the labourers of this country, wherever such incursions take place, as in the West of England, to a level with the paupers from Ireland. While the Irish

pauper can come over here for 1s. or 1s. 6d., these incursions will continue; and there is more expense incurred, I believe, in sending one of these Irish labourers back to his own country, than would be incurred if he were allowed to remain in a parish a sufficient time to establish a settlement. But, how can they refuse relief to those Irish labourers in England, when they would not refuse relief to foreigners? The Irish pauper here is entitled to casual support as long as he remains; and therefore, to avoid this expense, the parochial authorities transfer him to Ireland, and incur a still greater expense in doing so. How can they refuse relief to the Irish pauper, when they give it to foreigners who may be casually cast on our shores? A case has very recently occurred, where a number of persons from the north of Germany, who were emigrating to South America, thought it convenient to cast themselves upon our shore; and they were a great burden to the parishes in the district where they were cast. I will not pledge myself to introduce the principle of the English system of poor-laws into Ireland, without having first given the subject the most deliberate consideration as to its effect on the state of pauperism in this country, and as to its probable result in giving poor but able-bodied men in that country the right to demand assistance. I assure the House, that so far from having expressed any decided opinion on the question last session, I did all I could to show the enormous difficulties in the way of carrying it into effect. I still entertain that opinion, and do not know what machinery will be necessary for such a purpose. By rejecting the motion, the House will express no opinion on the merits of that most difficult question. All I can say is, that I shall be willing to act on the suggestion of the honourable member for Armagh, and to give to the condition of the poor of Ireland my full and deliberate consideration; but I cannot pledge myself to introduce any measure on the subject."

CHAPTER II.

CONSEQUENCES OF CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION CONTINUED.

A VERY unpleasant, and in many respects an unfortunate, question remained to be decided—the right of Mr. O’Connell to sit for Clare. At the time of his election he had assured the people that he was entitled to sit in parliament without taking any oaths inconsistent with the Catholic creed; on this he had staked his professional reputation, and given assurances that he held other learned opinions to the same purport. His return had been petitioned against, on the ground that as a Catholic he ought not to have been returned; but the committee to which the petition was referred, declared him duly elected. They could come to no other decision. The law did not prohibit the election of a Catholic; it only said that no person elected should be allowed to sit without taking certain oaths, which amounted to a complete abjuration of the Romish doctrines. Although the necessity for taking these oaths had just been removed by the Emancipation act, Mr. O’Connell was excluded from its operation, for its benefits were limited to those who should be returned *after* the commencement of the act. His claims had arisen under the old law, and by the old law they were to be decided.

On the 15th of May, 1829, Mr. O’Connell, introduced by Lords Duncannon and Ebrington, presented himself at the table. The clerk produced the oath which had been repealed by the late act, and, on Mr. O’Connell’s refusal to take it,

communicated the fact to the Speaker, who immediately stated the circumstance to the House, and his own opinion that the claimant could not sit without taking the old oath.

Mr. O'Connell immediately withdrew; upon which, Mr. Brougham moved that the honourable gentleman should be called back, and heard at the table in support of his claim to sit, on taking no other oath than that prescribed by the recent act. Mr. W. Wynne agreed with Mr. Brougham, that Mr. O'Connell should be heard in support of his claim, but that he should stand at the bar, not at the table, though he did not attach much importance to the distinction. Mr. Secretary Peel, however, thought that there was a great and manifest distinction between hearing the applicant at the table and at the bar, and that he had no right to be heard at the table. As this was a point of great nicety, and, in the opinion of many, of some importance, the debate was adjourned until Monday the 18th instant.

On that day, Mr. Secretary Peel proposed that Mr. O'Connell should be heard at the bar. His speech, which displayed considerable knowledge of parliamentary law, was to the following effect:—

“I think, sir, (said he) it might tend to save the time of the House, if I were at once to state the view which I take of the subject under consideration. This debate was adjourned upon the day that an honourable member of this House came down to take his seat, on having administered to him the oaths of allegiance and abjuration. The right honourable the Speaker, most properly, in the execution of his duty, which compels him to enforce the observance of the laws and usages of parliament, according to his construction of them, hesitated to admit the honourable member on taking the oaths of allegiance and abjuration, and required him to take the former oath of supremacy. The honourable member objected to take the former oath of supremacy, and preferred

a claim to sit on taking the oath prescribed by the act passed in the present session for the relief of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. The question immediately for the consideration of the House is this—whether or not the member for Clare should be heard at all on the subject, and if he should be heard, whether he should be heard at the table, or at the bar, of the House. With these questions I will in no manner mix up any other question. I will avoid expressing the slightest opinion on the legal point, whether the member for Clare has a right to sit without taking the former oath of supremacy. I will postpone my opinion on that point, until such time as it shall be discussed, and I will now address myself entirely to these questions—whether the member for Clare shall be heard at all; and if heard, whether he should be heard at the table, or at the bar, of the House. Having given this subject the fullest consideration, during the interim which has elapsed since the debate was adjourned, I have come to the conclusion that, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, it will be fitting to hear the member for Clare. I think so, because the case is a special case, which cannot possibly be drawn into precedent. It is a claim, founded on a question as to the construction of acts of parliament. Whatever the ultimate decision of the House may be on that claim, this decision will be more satisfactory, if the House permits the object of it to state his case in the manner which I shall afterwards point out. I am aware that the question is a special and individual one, which therefore, perhaps, may be exempted from the ordinary regulations, but I conceive that it is a question not only of admission to privilege, but of liability to penalty; because, the question will arise as to what oath was proper to be taken, and if the member for Clare should take the wrong oath, he will be subject to a penalty in a court of law. But, as there are special and peculiar

circumstances in the present case, I am desirous, particularly as it cannot be drawn into precedent, of giving the individual so circumstanced every fair advantage, consistent with the usual practice of the House. As to the question, whether the member for Clare shall be heard at the table or at the bar of the House, I have no hesitation in saying, that it would not be fitting to permit him to be heard at the table. I think that there is nothing in the precedents quoted which fortifies the honourable member's claim argumentatively to discuss at the table his right to sit in this House. The only precedents bearing on the present case are limited to those of Lord Fanshaw and Sir H. Monson. Lord Fanshaw and Sir H. Monson were members of the convention, which was subsequently declared to be a parliament. In addition to these, there are the cases of Mr. Archdale; and Mr. Wilkes who was brought up in custody to the bar. The cases of Lord Fanshaw and Sir H. Monson were very peculiar. They were members of the convention-parliament, and had sat in the House, without taking any oaths at all, either at the office of the lord-steward, or at the table of the House. In point of fact, it was impossible that they could take any oaths; for the only oath of allegiance which then existed was that prescribed by King James, and it is manifestly inconsistent that the members should take an oath prescribed by King James. They continued to sit as members of the convention, and were parties to the act by which the convention was declared to be a parliament, without taking any oaths, and were found in that condition, when an act passed abrogating the old oaths, and prescribing new ones. It was by that statute enacted, that after the 1st of March, 1689, every member should take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, as altered by the parliament, in lieu of the former ones. Four hundred members qualified on the first day, and on the 2nd of March there was a call of the House,

and many members who had not been present on the first day, were called upon to attend, and required to take the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, as prescribed by the 1st of William and Mary. These oaths were tendered to the two members by the speaker, and, upon declining to take them, they were ordered to withdraw. The case of Mr. O'Connell is, I apprehend, in substance the same. The speaker having tendered to him the oath of supremacy, he declined to take it, and was then ordered to withdraw. Whatever peculiarity attended the cases of Lord Fanshaw and Sir H. Monson as members of the convention-parliament, they did in substance what the member for Clare did—they stated their objections to take the oaths, and they were then ordered to withdraw; but they did not address any argument upon the subject while in the House, and they were not competent to do so, because they were incapable of being present until they had qualified according to law. The case of Mr. Archdale was very nearly the same. He acquainted the speaker, that he had consented to serve as a member of parliament, under the impression that his declaration of fidelity would be tantamount to taking an oath. When he came into the House, the oaths were tendered to him, which he declined taking, and he was ordered to withdraw. Then comes the case of Mr. Wilkes, which a right honourable member thinks established the right of the member for Clare to be heard at the table."

Mr. Wynne explained.—"I stated, that the case of Mr. Wilkes establishes Mr. O'Connell's right to be heard at the bar."

Mr. Peel.—"The course pursued on that occasion clearly proved that a member who had not qualified must be heard at the bar. Mr. Wilkes was brought up in the custody of the Marshal of the King's Bench, and, before anything passed, he desired to put this question to the Speaker,

whether, or not, as he had not taken the oaths, and had not presented his qualification at the table, he did not subject himself to the penalties inflicted by the statutes of Charles II., if he addressed any observations to the House. He was then ordered to withdraw. The subject was referred to the House; and the opinion which the House delivered was, that though he had not taken the oaths, and had not presented his qualification, yet there was nothing in the act which prevented him from appearing at the bar. But, independently of these precedents, the question might be tried by the dictates of common sense. Assuming that the oath of supremacy was in force according to the interpretation which had been placed on it by the organ of the opinion of that House, whose duty it was, subject to the control of the House, to interpret the law, and to act upon that interpretation;—assuming that it was quite inconsistent with law to permit the member for Clare to be present at discussions of the House, and to deliver arguments without taking the oath of supremacy—what will be the consequence of remaining in the House, having omitted to take that oath? The law subjects individuals who sit, or vote, or enter into the House, not having taken the oath of supremacy, to heavy penalties; and therefore, even if there were considerable doubt on the subject, the House ought not to lend its sanction to the possible infraction of the law. The object of the House is to hear what can be urged by the individual in question in support of his claim. That purpose will be answered by hearing him at the bar. By hearing him at the bar he will be exempt from all penalties which possibly may attach to him, if heard at the table; and therefore, in reference to his own security, it is better that he should be heard at the bar than at the table. These were the reasons which have brought me to the two following conclusions; namely, that under the special

circumstances of the case, as it is incapable of being drawn into precedent, being an individual question, and as it rests on the construction of acts of parliament, it is right to give to the member whose case is involved in this consideration the privilege of stating it, by himself, counsel, or agents. I have also stated the grounds why I think the member for Clare ought to be heard at the bar of the House, in preference to being heard at the table. I know that these matters are considered by some persons, but I believe by no member of this House, of trifling importance. Great public interest, I am convinced, is concerned in maintaining the privileges of this House, and in doing an act of substantial justice, we should take care to see that it is done according to forms, which superficial minds only hold up to ridicule. An honourable friend appears to be under the impression, that the House ought to admit the member for Clare into the House. In reference to his having been permitted to advance to the table in the first instance, without being called upon to produce a certificate of his having taken the oaths before the Lord Steward, the precedents were in his favour. That was exactly the case of Mr. Archdale. Before appearing in the House, he informed the Speaker that he entertained strong objections to take the oaths. The presumption, therefore, is, that he had not qualified out of doors; and, notwithstanding that, the House admitted him to the table for the purpose of taking the oaths. The presumption is, that the member has complied with the law, which directs that certain oaths should be taken before the Lord Steward, and he subjects himself to a high penalty, if, having neglected to do so, he takes his seat. The power to administer the oaths is given to the Lord Steward for the satisfaction of the crown, which is not content by their being administered by the officers of that House; and the crown requires that the members of the House should give such security with respect

to their allegiance to the crown as parliament should require. The practice of requiring the certificate has not steadily been adhered to. I myself took my seat in the House, after qualifying in the Lord Steward's office, without my certificate being demanded. I therefore think that the course adopted by the Speaker is exactly in consonance with the usages of the House. I shall propose, by way of amendment, in order to bring the question to an issue, to leave out from the word 'O'Connell,' to the end of the question, in order to add the words—'the member for Clare, be heard at the bar, by himself, his counsel, or agents, in respect of his claim to sit and vote in parliament, without taking the oath of supremacy,' instead thereof."

This motion was put, and Mr. O'Connell being called in, delivered an able, eloquent, and temperate speech in support of his claim. The discussion that followed was conducted almost entirely by the lawyers who had seats in the House. Of these Mr. Brougham alone held that Mr. O'Connell had substantiated his claim; though many declared that his exclusion would be ungracious, especially as a Catholic had already taken his seat under the new act. This was the Earl of Surrey, eldest son of the Duke of Norfolk, who had been elected for the borough of Horsham, under the new act. Mr. Secretary Peel, with very obvious reluctance, argued that Mr. O'Connell was excluded from the benefit of the Emancipation act, and that in consequence his election should be declared void.

"It is asserted (said he) that this enactment has not only a prospective but a retrospective operation. Without entering upon the question as to what decision a court of justice might pronounce, in reference to the penalties for not taking the oaths, I will maintain, that the Relief act has a retrospective operation, so as to embrace Mr. O'Connell's case, and it can in no other way be made applicable to it; for Mr. O'Connell

was elected before the passing of that act. It is not the law under which he was elected, and there can be no cavil on that point; for so early as the reign of Henry VI., the certificate of the sheriff, that an individual was duly elected, constituted sufficient evidence as to the time that member was returned, and such certificate, as to the learned gentleman's return, is in possession of the House. The honourable and learned gentleman has adroitly endeavoured, by referring to proceedings in another place, and by alluding to a clause which has been there proposed by a high legal authority, during the progress of the Relief bill, for the purpose of excluding Mr. O'Connell by name, to prove that there is a strong presumption that the present enactment was insufficient for that purpose. Now, I apprehend that the argument of Lord Tenterden was, that if Mr. O'Connell would take the oath of supremacy, there was nothing to prevent him from taking his seat; that the necessity of making the declaration against transubstantiation was removed, and that there only remained the oath of supremacy to keep him out. But, by referring to the act, it will be seen that its operation is wholly prospective; for it enacts, 'that from and after the commencement of this act, it shall be lawful for any person professing the Roman Catholic religion, being a peer, or who shall, after the commencement of this act, be returned as a member for the House of Commons, to sit and vote in either House of Parliament respectively, being in all other respects duly qualified to sit and vote therein, upon taking and subscribing the following oath, instead of the oath of allegiance, abjuration, and supremacy.' The act thus applies, not only to a Catholic, in the situation of a peer, but to a Catholic who should be returned a member of the House of Commons; and its operation is strictly confined to the future. We must deal judicially with this question, and decide according to the privilege of parliament, without reference to extrinsic circum-

stances. Mr. O'Connell has complained that he is excluded from the enjoyment of a civil privilege. But the legislature has drawn the distinction in the Relief act between a mere civil privilege and the right of sitting in parliament; and the House will see at once the justice of the distinction. The honourable member is excluded from no franchise or civil right whatever, to which his Catholic fellow-countrymen have been admitted by the Relief act. He is entitled to the enjoyment of all the privileges and franchises conferred by that act, on complying with its provisions; but, in this instance, he claimed a right to sit as member of parliament under the old law, and by the operation of that law he is excluded. Upon the whole, I consider it our bounden duty to act in accordance with all the previous custom of parliament in such cases; and no considerations connected with, or arising out of other questions, should induce us to depart from that course. To Roman Catholics returned hereafter, we shall extend the benefit of the existing law, but it would be wrong to extend its benefit, by a retrospective operation, to a Roman Catholic who has been returned under a different state of the law. Under such circumstances I feel bound to say that, on this occasion, I am not governed by a reference to any external circumstances, and that, let the consequences be what they may, I cannot bring myself to adopt a different course. I am acting judicially, and I must vote for the resolution proposed by my honourable and learned friend."

On the motion for issuing a new writ, Mr. Spring Rice proposed as an amendment, to introduce a bill for the purpose of enabling Mr. O'Connell to take his seat, but as this was likely to re-open the whole question of Emancipation which had been so recently set at rest, Mr. Spring Rice withdrew his amendment. Mr. Peel felt it to be his duty not to allow the discussion to close without placing his opinions on record.

“I cordially rejoice, (he said), in the announcement of the honourable member. So little, indeed am I disposed to take any triumph on this question, that I prefer such a conclusion to any negative of the motion, although supported by a large majority. Indeed, I should not have said a single word on this subject, had I not wished to make an observation on an expression which has fallen from an honourable member, attributing harshness and severity to those who brought forward the motion for the exclusion of Mr. O’Connell. Now, everything which could give the slightest semblance of the motion being a personal proceeding, has been wholly avoided. So far from wishing to push the proceedings beyond the usual practice of parliament, the motion, although not expressly enjoined by law, was not in the discretion of the House, and was in every respect conformable to its practice, in cases either exactly similar, or bearing a strong analogy to that of the member for Clare. In the cases of Lord Fanshaw and Sir H. Monson, upon a refusal to qualify, they were discharged from their attendance, not expelled, and new writs were issued. The case of Archdale, the Quaker, was, however, precisely in point. There has been a case too of recent occurrence, which bears a strong analogy to that of Mr. O’Connell. I allude to the case of Mr. Southey. Mr. Southey was elected member for Downton, and having therefore written a letter to the Speaker, intimating that he did not possess the necessary qualification, the Speaker read the letter to the House, and a new writ was issued immediately. So far, therefore, as precedent went, the practice had always been in strict conformity with the present motion. Has not the House, however, acted with the greatest forbearance to Mr. O’Connell? It is well known to every member that Mr. O’Connell has been in town from the commencement of the session; and yet, although this is notorious, has any motion been made to compel him to

present himself for the purpose of taking the oaths? No motion of that kind has been attempted; and when the decision of the House was made, that decision, it ought to be recollected, was forced upon it by Mr. O'Connell himself. The course of the House has been throughout perfectly justifiable. The House could not, in compliance with its duty, have adopted any other. Mr. O'Connell has pronounced a determination not to take the oaths; and, I will ask, is not this House bound to provide for a new election? It has been intimated, that government has used its influence to increase the majority upon this question. To this statement, I give the most peremptory contradiction. The government has not interfered in any way upon the subject. Even those ordinary forms which we all know are used to give information to members when business of importance may be expected, have been departed from in this instance. I view Mr. O'Connell's case merely as that of an individual; and shall treat it as I should the case of any other member. The course which the law of the land and the precedents of parliament pointed out, shall be, without hesitation, pursued towards Mr. O'Connell, regardless of the consequences which an honourable gentleman seemed to fear would result from doing so. My gallant friend seems to anticipate with considerable alarm the consequences which would follow the course now proposed for adoption by the House. Now, I feel no such alarm. The observations of my gallant friend, I shall answer by merely stating a few facts respecting the course which government has pursued, during the last few weeks, in the county with which my gallant friend is connected. Several instances of insubordination and disturbance having recently occurred in the manufacturing districts in that county, I thought it right, in mercy to the deluded sufferers, to send over to Ireland for the transport of some troops into Lancashire. Now, so far from being informed that they could

not be spared, I received the following letter from the highest authority in the sister-kingdom; and I mention the fact, to show the beneficial consequences which have already resulted from the late measure of concession. On the 9th of May, I wrote to the lord-lieutenant to send over three regiments if he could spare them; and on the 11th, his excellency wrote to me the following reply:—‘I have this day received your letter of the 9th, signifying your wish to withdraw, if possible, one regiment of cavalry and two of infantry from the military force of this country. In reply to which, it gives me real satisfaction to inform you, that, under present appearances, these regiments may be spared, without any danger to the public peace of this country.’ There is enough in this letter to satisfy me of the beneficial manner in which the late bill has operated upon the tranquillity of Ireland. Why then, is it to be said that the present question, which is merely one of parliamentary privilege, is calculated to undo the good that has already been achieved? I care nothing about the new election for Clare; all I consider is, the necessity of maintaining the just privileges of parliament. Upon the question of expediency also, I am much fortified in my opinion; for if this consideration were to be re-opened, what would those think who were affected by the forty-shilling disfranchisement bill, which was the price paid for the larger measure. Upon the fullest deliberation, therefore, I see no other course which it becomes the House to take, than to agree to the motion of my honourable and learned friend.”

This was not the only debate which arose out of the measure of Catholic emancipation. The sudden change of so large a number of members on a great question gave much offence even to its supporters in the country, and induced a belief that the state of the parliamentary representation placed too large a share of power at the disposal of the ministry. The old Tories adopted the cry for reform, assert-

ing, and perhaps believing, that a parliament fairly elected by the people would resist the increase of Catholic influence and the progress of the principles of free trade. Indeed, it is probable that not only then, but up to a very recent period, the cries of "No Popery," and "Protection to British Industry," would have rallied such an amount of ignorance and prejudice, as would for a season have overborne the common sense of the country. Neither were the Tories so inconsistent in the advocacy of parliamentary reform as was generally imagined; it had been the favourite measure of their party a century before, and by its means they not unreasonably expected to set aside the Hanoverian succession, and restore the exiled house of Stuart. It is now a well-established fact, that, but for the Septennial act, the Jacobites would have secured a parliament ready to undo all that had been accomplished by the Revolution.

The subject of parliamentary reform was introduced in the House of Commons on the 2nd of June by the Marquis of Blandford, the eldest son of the Duke of Marlborough; and as he was himself possessed of a predominant interest in certain boroughs, reasonable doubts were entertained of his sincerity. His speech, however, was manly, candid, and temperate:—

"Sir," said he, "it may perhaps be thought that the magnitude of the question, and the splendid eloquence of its former advocates, should have deterred me from rashly embarking on the consideration of it. But, though I may despair of doing it justice, I feel its importance, or rather its necessity, too strongly, to leave the thing unattempted through a consciousness of inability; and in asserting and advocating my own peculiar views of it, I am fully prepared for the imputation that those views are erroneous—that my fears are groundless—and that the measures and means of reform which I would propose are neither called for by the exigency

of the times, nor by the existence of any real danger from the projects of the Roman Catholic body. I speak of that body, sir, as a large political party in the state. I speak not of individuals—of individuals of that body, I would say, that there is no one in this House more ready than I am to admit their honour and integrity; but I am speaking of a large class and denomination of individuals—a large and powerful political party of six or seven millions of men—a party acknowledging a common head and centre of union, a spiritual sovereign, and that sovereign residing in a foreign country. In such a state of things, and under such an intermixture of foreign and domestic relations, I shall continue to think that it is the part of prudence to prevent the accumulation of Roman Catholic power in this House. Those who may be disposed to ridicule these opinions, are liable to be told that they are as ignorant of human nature, and the workings of party spirit, as they are of the energies of the Roman church. As soon as gentlemen of that persuasion enter this House, they will be found to form a party. That party will be considered by the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland as their real representatives—as the special defenders of their rights, the vindicators of their wrongs, the promoters of their wishes and their hopes. This Roman Catholic party, like all other parties, both in and out of this House, will be desirous of increasing its political strength; and looking to the energy of that body, its union of purpose and extensive co-operation, I am convinced, that they will enter the borough market with better chances and larger means of purchase than any of their competitors. Seats in this House will be bought up by the agents of this wealthy, powerful, and enterprising body, and thus to their county strength in Ireland will be added their burgage-tenure strength in this country; and their whole number of representatives will present a well-ordered and compact phalanx,

animated by one spirit, and impelled to the same measures by the same motives and purposes. Let it not be thought, sir, that I am disposed to contend, that any immediate danger is to be apprehended from the magnitude of their numbers in this House—though, if the reports which circulate be true, it would appear that the system which I am foretelling has already made a beginning. But I do contend that we are not bound to wait till danger threatens. I do contend that it is the part of prudence to devise the means of prevention and defence; and I do insist that those means are justifiable in the prospect of a possibility of danger.”

His lordship then entered into a statistical examination of the state of the representation, and showed that fifty-six members of the House of Commons, or about one-ninth of the entire body, were returned by three hundred and fifty-four voters. He stated, that from a calculation made in 1815, it appeared that one-half of the English and Welsh representatives in the House of Commons were returned by eleven thousand persons, and the other half by above nine millions. He ridiculed very happily the absurdity of having two members returned by seven electors at Gatton, and two more chosen by the proprietor of the sheep-folds of Sarum. Still the speech fell heavily on the ears of the audience; it was felt to be rather a demonstration of hostility to the minister than an earnest effort to effect its professed object, and was therefore regarded with coldness and some impatience. The conclusion of the marquis’s address, which was very effectively delivered, produced, however, rather a favourable impression on the House:—

“Sir, this is neither the time nor the place to enter into nice verifications of facts; it is sufficient to lay grounds for future inquiry, and I believe it will then appear that I have understood the anomalies of our representation. But, sir, the answer given to all this is, ‘it works well!’ This has

been the ready reply since the time that the late Mr. Canning's eloquence gave it currency, and made it popular. 'It works well!' True; it does work very well for the jobbers in the borough market; it does work very well for all who go on to power, and profit, and distinction, by the system; and I dare say, ministers will be the last to say it works ill. But, sir, it works destructively for the empire at large—it works destructively for the country and its colonies—it works against every one of the great interests of this country—against the well-being of its trade, its manufactures, its agriculture. Majorities, and,—according to my views of the questions which have been carried,—fatal majorities in this House have been swelled by means of this influence; and what is most mischievous is, the existence of such a system degrades this House in the estimation of the people—the representative body loses the respect and confidence of the body represented. It is to this cause, sir, that the indignation of the country ascribes the success of the odious principle of free trade; a principle which, if persisted in, will spread the desolation still farther, which so fearfully prevails, and is now pressing so severely on our commerce. To this again is to be attributed the largeness of that majority which lately overthrew the constitution, and proved to the people how very little their prayers were heard or heeded.

“How then, sir, is a system so mischievous to be mended? Which are the most pressing of its evils? Where should the proposed reform begin? Unquestionably in the extinction of decayed boroughs. Whether this should be effected by compensation, or without compensation, and whether we should extend our inquiries to self-elected corporate bodies, possessing the rights of franchise, will be matter for future discussion. But, sir, vital interests are in the meanwhile at stake. The nation knows and feels it to be so; it feels it in all the

ramifications of its commerce, in all the elements of its wealth and greatness—it feels it in the very husbandry of its soil, the staple of its power and prosperity—and it feels, too, that it is not safe to trust to burgage-tenures and proprietary influence what should be confided to a chaster representation. The disease, no doubt, is of long standing, but the seat of it has been so well ascertained, that it will require no great skill in political anatomy to remove the parts affected. They cannot be cured—they must be cut out—

‘ Immedicabile vulnus

Ense recidendum, ne pars sincera trahatur.’

“Entertaining, therefore, sir, these sentiments, and impressed with a strong feeling that in the existing circumstances of the country (which it would be idle for any man to seek to disguise from himself), it would be expedient for this House not to separate, without evincing some disposition to take this question into its consideration at no distant period; I have thought it my duty, at this eleventh hour, to direct the attention of honourable members to it; and I shall conclude my present observations by conjuring them to bear in mind the ever-memorable words of Mr. Burke, as cited by Mr. Fox.—‘Representation (not the unreal mockery, but the efficient substance of representation) is the sovereign remedy for every disorder, the infallible security against popular discontent.’”

The motion was seconded by Mr. O’Neil, one of the most vehement advocates of Protestant ascendancy, in a speech of very moderate ability, though of very great pretensions. It was supported by some of the old, steady, and consistent reformers, who, however, repudiated that dislike of free trade, and that apprehension of Catholic influence which animated the noble mover. Some anxiety was manifested to hear the opinion of Mr. Peel, who was at that time sup-

posed to be not unfavourable to some moderate measure of parliamentary reform; but the speech which the right honourable secretary delivered, was little calculated to satisfy the general expectations of the public.

“I am not prepared (said he), to affirm the truth of the allegations contained in these resolutions. Though I differ in opinion from the noble marquis, I am ready to admit the temper and ability with which he has submitted this question to the House; and although his Majesty’s government has unfortunately incurred his disapprobation, and though I differ from the noble marquis on this particular question, I beg to assure him, that that circumstance does not in the slightest degree lessen the satisfaction which I feel at seeing the noble marquis, the descendant of an illustrious warrior, and the representative of a noble house, bringing forward a measure of this description in such a moderate spirit, and supporting his opinion with an ability worthy of the cause which he has undertaken, and of the name which he bears. This is, however, a subject of such vast importance, that it is obviously necessary that ample time should be afforded for its consideration; and it is plain that if the House is prepared to affirm the abstract principles of resolutions like these, it should follow them up by some practical measure. Now, I conceive, that it would be impossible for the House, even if it is prepared to affirm the allegations of those resolutions, to follow them up by any practical measure at this late period of the session. This is my first objection to this motion. I also object to the character which these resolutions tend to affix upon the small boroughs of this country. If honourable members would even go the length of adopting the charges preferred by the resolutions against the small-borough system, would it be fair to give the sanction of the House to such charges, without adopting some remedy for the evil, if evil there exists in this portion of our represen-

tative system? But I am not prepared to affirm the truth of the charges made against the close boroughs. I cannot assent to the proposition that boroughs, where the electors are few in number, are more open to bribery and corruption than boroughs where the number of electors is great; because I have no evidence whatever of the fact. I cannot, therefore, consent to involve in a sweeping condemnation those boroughs where there is a small number of electors. I have no reason to suppose that the trustees of these boroughs have violated the trust reposed in them. But even if, after due consideration, it should appear that any of these boroughs have not honestly exercised their franchise, the noble lord has not stated how he would propose to appropriate the forfeited franchise. The honourable gentleman who has seconded the motion, has advocated the necessity of adopting these resolutions now, with a view to pledge the House to the discussion of this important question next session. But if the resolutions are negatived now, the noble lord will not lose the opportunity of having this question discussed next session; and it so happens, by a fortuitous coincidence, that this very night a noble lord has given notice of a motion for next session, for the purpose of giving the elective franchise to the manufacturing towns of Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds. So that if there should be no time for debating the question of parliamentary reform this session, ample opportunity will be afforded for the discussion of the subject in the next session. The noble lord, besides, rests his motion upon grounds which I imagine will not meet with the approbation of the advocates of the general measure of parliamentary reform on the other side of the House. The noble lord has attacked the close boroughs as having, in the first instance, been the means of the adoption by this House of the abominable principles of free trade; and secondly, as having enabled this House, contrary to the sense of the people, to carry the

question of Catholic emancipation. Now, those who advocate the general measure of reform, will scarcely support the resolutions of the noble lord on the ground that the close boroughs have contributed to the triumph of a great principle over local prejudices and passions; nor am I aware that the noble lord's objection to the existence of the close boroughs, as influencing the adoption of the principle of free trade, will have a greater weight with those honourable members. If the system of close boroughs has contributed to the triumph of these great principles, such a system should rather be preserved than sacrificed. Even if I could at all bring myself to assent to the proposition of the noble lord, I should object to the period at which it has been brought forward."

Towards the close of the session Mr. Brougham presented a petition from Birmingham on the subject of the currency, advocating the opinions for which the economists of that town have obtained no very enviable notoriety. Mr. Brougham expressed his dissent from the views urged by the petitioners; but they were zealously supported by Mr. Attwood, who at the same time reprobated the change which Mr. Peel's celebrated bill had made in the monetary circulation of the country, a change to which he, like Cobbett, attributed every commercial derangement and manufacturing crisis which had occurred since the passing of that memorable measure. The opinion of the country generally was, however, in favour of Peel's measure; those who advocated a return to paper currency became fewer and fewer every year, and the Birmingham school of political economy was fast becoming a proverbial name for incurable perseverance in absurdity. Mr. Attwood's speech exposed him to sharp retort; its tone and temper were unsuited to the occasion; he spoke too much like a passionate lecturer, who, conscious that he is not likely to convince his hearers, takes

his revenge by scolding them most heartily. Mr. Peel's reply was more calm and moderate, but it was nevertheless very sharp, stinging, and effective :—

“ If,” said he, “ the honourable gentleman who has just sat down could propose any plan calculated to remove the calamities of the country, of which he complains, he should have chosen a proper period of the session to unfold it ; but instead of doing so, he has got up at this late period of the session, and complains, in aggravated terms, of the evils under which we are suffering, without suggesting any remedy. It is impossible to restore the currency of this country to a sound and healthy state, without producing a great deal of suffering in the country. The currency, after the year 1797, having become greatly depreciated, ministers had no other alternative open to them, but either to leave things as they were, or to do that which would be attended with distress and suffering for years, to some classes in the country. Two measures offered themselves to their consideration in 1819—either to leave matters as they were, with a depreciated standard, or to raise the standard by returning to a metallic currency. An equitable adjustment was also recommended ; and it was proposed, that the public creditor with whom a debt had been contracted in a depreciated paper currency, should, upon our returning to a metallic currency, be paid only in proportion to the value of the paper currency in which the debt had been contracted. The first and great objection to this is, that it may be impossible to discover the original creditor ; and, in the next place, it would be obviously unjust to adopt such a measure in regard to those individuals into whose hands those funds subsequently passed, and who may have purchased them in a currency but little depreciated below the existing standard. I hope never to live to see the time when a restriction upon the Bank will again be found necessary. It would be easy

for government, by an issue of paper, to increase the circulation of the country; but what would be the consequences? that the exchanges would rise, and that gold would be carried out of the country. Let power but once be given to the Bank to issue paper not payable in gold, and all the consequences which Mr. Hume, in one of his essays on the increase of the currency has pointed out, will immediately follow. Such a measure would for the moment promote the prosperity of the country; and it is undoubtedly in the power of the government, by such means, for a time, to establish a factitious prosperity in the country. Such an increase in the currency would, for the time, give a stimulus to trade and commerce; but if I am sure of that, I am still more certain, that such prosperity would not last long, and that the period of unnatural excitement would be followed by a period of languor, and that greater distress and suffering would arise than has ever before been witnessed. It is not necessary to look to the state of the exchanges during the last two months, to see what would be the effect of the issue of a paper currency. The government would by such means encourage the departure of gold from this country. It would leave the country; while the Bank would be liable still to pay its gold on demand; and I am convinced, that the issue of a paper currency could never be returned to, without relieving the Bank from the obligation of paying in gold. Such an increase in the currency would, in the end, only increase the sufferings of the country. The government is determined to adhere to the present system, and for the reasons which I have stated, I never will consent to a revision or alteration of the existing currency of the country. The exports of the country, its imports, and the quantity of excisable articles, have, during this period, increased. As the consumption of excisable articles has increased, the receipts of the revenue have progressively increased also.

How does the honourable member reconcile these facts to his statement of the total depression of trade, and deficient demand? There is a fact which ought not to be lost sight of in looking at this alleged depression, which is the probability that the prosperity of one rising district, such as Manchester, affected perceptibly and injuriously the established manufactures of other districts, having, as it may be called, a monopoly hitherto in that branch of manufacture, such as Macclesfield and Spitalfields. Instead of factories having decreased in number, or the spirit of speculation in this respect being on the decline, the number has sensibly increased every year since 1820, more particularly at Manchester; and, singularly enough, these factories were either silk factories altogether, or factories of goods compounded of silk and cotton, or other material. In 1820 they were fifty-four in number, and they were assessed to the poor-rates of the town at the annual value of £16,816. In 1823 there were fifty-six, and they were assessed at a yearly annual value of £18,293. In 1826, the year in which the small-notes' bill passed, they increased to seventy-two, and were assessed at £24,000; and in 1828, the year prior to the small-notes' bill coming into operation, they were in number seventy-three, and were assessed at £25,245 annual value. It is true, that during a part of this period some of them were untenanted; but of those tenanted in 1820, there were fifty-two factories, whilst in 1828 there were sixty. How then, if trade is not progressively increasing, does it happen that the desire to embark in this branch of manufacture has increased from 1820 up to last year? The same disposition to speculate in this branch of manufacture has been displayed in Charleton-Row and Salford, suburbs of Manchester—the former in 1820 having but five manufactories, in 1828 twelve. It would be absurd to say that this is an evidence of distress in this trade, or a want of

incentive to speculate. Yet the honourable member fancies there is, notwithstanding, a cessation of demand for these articles of manufacture. To place the reverse of this argument in the strongest light, it is only necessary to inspect the returns as to the number of looms at work in 1823, which was but two thousand three hundred; whilst in 1828 the number was increased to eight thousand. The information I have on the subject of the silk trade there is, that the trade is brisk, and that no good silk-weaver is at present in want of employment. Now, were I to hazard an opinion as to the present depression of trade, I should be disposed to attribute it to a variety of causes. Nor is it a singular epoch in the history of our manufactures. Antecedently to 1797, and ere any tampering had taken place with the currency, depression and languor manifested themselves for a time, which was followed by a season of activity. Much is to be attributed last year to the over-productiveness of our manufactures; to the bad harvest, not a little; to the effect of the American tariff—a measure which, it would seem, has lost its efficacy, in consequence of the activity in smuggling British goods into the United States. Yet, though these causes combined to depress trade, prices have recovered, and there is an improvement in the market; nor do I doubt that the vessel will right itself, should it be afforded an opportunity. It would, in my mind, be wise not to interfere by the appointment of a committee. I have forgotten to mention that the factory system has superseded so much the exercise of manual labour, that extreme distress has been suddenly brought on particular classes of tradesmen, whilst the trade itself flourishes; and in some instances the machinery is so extremely expensive, that the manufacturers, rather than put it out of play, consent to go on incurring a diminution of profits to the extent of ten per cent, or even more. The excellence of our machinery,

and its substitution for manual labour, each day throws many out of employment. This is felt more particularly by the poor Irish at Manchester; who crowd thither whenever they are encouraged to expect occupation, being enabled to come over at the trifling charge of 1s. 6d. a head, to a country which not only gives them work, but allows them a provision from the poor-rates when ill. Their situation has given considerable concern to the magistrates in that district; and they have very properly in some cases admitted their claim to relief from parochial funds. I beg the House, especially as appearances are improving, not to unsettle the public mind on a subject of such vital importance. As a minister of the crown, and speaking with the deliberation with which a person in my situation ought to speak, I will say, that no measure could be introduced, which would more directly tend to wound our commercial and manufacturing interests, than to derange the system of the currency of the country."

The subject was renewed on the presentation of a petition from Blackburn, on which occasion Mr. Peel said—

"I cannot help thinking that the presentation of a petition, and one too without notice, is a most inconvenient season for discussing the merits of so important a question as the state of the nation. I shall not therefore follow the honourable baronet through his details; although, if the time were a fit one, I am not without ample materials for rebutting the inferences which he has drawn from them. Upon one point I ought to concur with the honourable baronet, whose fault it certainly is not that he was deprived of a suitable opportunity of bringing forward the motion of which he had given notice. At the same time, I am bound to assure him that it is not my fault that the discussion did not come on; for I attended in my place, prepared to argue the whole question with the honourable baronet, and I sincerely believe that the

circumstance of not making a House on that particular night was purely accidental. The subject, however, has certainly been very fully discussed upon another occasion; so that there ought to be no complaints of a denial of hearing. I am far from denying the existence of distress. In many parts of the country that distress is severe, and is accompanied by great privation and suffering. Particularly in the district from which the petition that has been presented by the honourable baronet proceeds, is the distress great. I doubt, indeed, if any other part of the kingdom has suffered so much from the effect which the introduction of machinery has had on the hand-loom of the weavers, as that district. It is impossible to look at the efforts of the population in that district to live, and at the inadequacy of their wages, without painful commiseration. But I very much fear, that while the existence of distress is admitted, it must also be admitted, that, in the complicated relations of society, it is impossible to apply a satisfactory remedy. I am convinced that, on mature reflection, the honourable baronet, the member for Cornwall, will see that the solution of a mathematical problem is a thing entirely different from the administration of practical relief in a case such as that in question. Those persons must not be supposed to be indifferent to the distress, who are adverse to the policy of entering upon the inquiry recommended by the other side of the House. They feel that unless they could be pretty confident that such an inquiry would be productive of a satisfactory result, it might aggravate the evil which it is intended to diminish. The honourable member for Aberdeen has declared that there are at least two subjects which ought to be fully investigated before the separation of parliament; namely, the corn-laws, and the question of emigration. Now, really, if there are any two topics which have occupied the attention of parliament more than any others, they are precisely those which

the honourable member for Aberdeen has described as demanding inquiry. The corn-laws the honourable member for Aberdeen has himself brought under the consideration of the House but a short time ago, when the subject was fully discussed. The honourable member has himself made a speech on the occasion which lasted three hours and three quarters, and to which I listened with great attention. The honourable member's proposition was to substitute a fixed duty on corn for the present scale of duties; but the House did not agree with him on the subject. Constant fluctuations on such a subject are most injurious. What advantage can accrue to the country, if on every question, such as that of the corn-laws, the legislation is never allowed to be settled even for a single year? Having made an experiment respecting it last year, is it desirable for the House to pledge itself to enter into an inquiry on the subject next year? Are such questions always to be at the mercy of any man who chooses to agitate them, and propose that they should be unsettled? If, whenever distress exists in any particular place—distress attributed to machinery, or the importation of foreign wool, or the system of the corn-laws—an inquiry was immediately demanded, there would be an end to all confidence, and no one would venture to embark his capital in any commercial enterprise. I must protest, however, against an unwillingness to enter into such inquiries being considered as an insensibility to distress. With respect to the existing distress, I must say, that I do not take so gloomy a view of the subject as some honourable gentlemen seem disposed to take. I cannot allow that the capital of the country is daily diminishing. Still less can I allow that our commerce is carrying on by the application of capital from which the capitalist receives no returns. Such might be the case for a single year; but when I hear the same thing stated for eight or ten years, my answer is, that under such circumstances, the

capital would be withdrawn. Against the allegation, that the capital of the country has diminished, I will state one strong fact. In the year 1815—a period when the currency of the country was increased by a paper circulation—the rental of the county of Lancashire was valued, for the purpose of determining the contributions to the county rate. That valuation was, I believe, perfectly fair. By some persons, however, it has been considered unfair, and another valuation took place last year for the same purpose. The valuation of the rental on land and on the manufacturing establishments of Lancashire, in 1815, amounted to three millions. Last year the valuation (although the improvement in the currency would have a tendency to diminish the nominal amount) was four millions. This fact I oppose to the statement that the manufactures and the agriculture of the country are carrying on at a positive loss. While I make this statement, however, I admit the evil of the unequal distribution of wealth in this country, and the general disadvantage which springs from the accumulation of great wealth in the hands of a few individuals; but this is unavoidable, and emanates from the same cause as the increased production of machinery, which, in its improved condition, becomes so extensively a substitute for manual labour. In conclusion, it is, I fear, a lamentable fact, that so many causes combine to produce this state of things, that any attempt to legislate with a view to the correction of any of them by the application of specific measures, instead of mitigating, would aggravate all the evils of which the suffering classes of society complain. The government will, however, give their best attention to the subject."

During the course of this session, Mr. Brougham, in deference to the Protestant Dissenters, abandoned a measure he had prepared for the advancement of national education. It was the object of his bill to place the system under the

control of the established church, because he despaired of seeing public instruction recognized as a department of the state in England, though it is so in every other civilized community. Late events have shown that there is a section of the Nonconformists opposed not merely to the interference of the church, but even of the state itself, with the education of the people. In 1829, the Nonconformists would unanimously and indignantly have spurned such a doctrine as that which this section of their body has recently set forth—that it is neither the duty of the state to educate the people, nor the right of the people to be educated by the state. Mr. Brougham was of opinion that the jealousy then manifested towards the church was both unreasonable and unjustifiable; and as his sentiments have not since altered, it is desirable to have them set forth in his own nervous language:

“When I brought forward my propositions,” said he, “I thought that no general system of education could be proposed, with any chance of success, which was independent of the established church. I am of the same opinion still; and everything I have heard and read on the subject tends to convince me of the correctness of it. The measure has been greatly opposed, in consequence of this opinion, by several religious sects, and it is principally owing to this opposition that it has been withdrawn. I entertain a very high degree of respect for the Protestant Dissenters, who have always shown themselves the steady friends of civil and religious liberty; and it is principally owing to their opposition that I have given way to what I can only consider the prejudices of these people. Whether the members of the church would have supported my proposal, I am unable to say. The opposition of the Dissenters I can easily account for; at the time I brought forward this measure, they were labouring under disabilities which justified them to a great extent in the jealousy which they felt. Now, however, since

the measure of last spring, such feelings, I trust, no longer exist. Nine parts in ten of the opposition to the measure have been removed. For the purpose of acquiring information respecting the present state of education, I have written to the ministers of five hundred parishes in England. In answer to these letters, I have received replies from four hundred and eighty-seven clergymen, and I have no hesitation in saying, that the major part of these gentlemen have expressed their most decided approbation of a general system of education."

The usurpation of the crown of Portugal by the infamous Don Miguel, had filled that unfortunate country with misery and bloodshed; the British government refused to interfere in the contest between the usurper and his niece, holding that it was not entitled to make any distinction between the claimants of the Portuguese crown, in so far as their respective pretensions were supported only by domestic force; and it considered itself bound to observe a strict neutrality in regard to all military operations. A great number of Portuguese refugees, most of them military men, had arrived in England, taking up their residence principally in Portsmouth, Falmouth, and the neighbourhood. They prepared to fit out an expedition against some of the ports held by Don Miguel, and when this was forbidden by the British ministers, they asserted that the troops were destined for Brazil. Four vessels sailed, having on board six hundred and fifty-two officers and men, but the British government suspecting that their destination was the island of Terceira, which remained faithful to the cause of Donna Maria, sent a small squadron under the command of Captain Walpole, to prevent their landing. Saldanha, the Portuguese commander, refused to turn back at Walpole's dictation, until a shot was fired which killed one man, and wounded another; he then perplexed the English captain, by surrendering himself and his men

prisoners of war. Walpole refused to accept them, but he escorted the squadron from the island, and Saldanha retired to Brest.

This occurrence excited a great deal of notice in Europe, and was brought by Sir James Macintosh under the notice of the British parliament. It was represented as a direct act of hostility in favour of the usurper against the rightful sovereign of Portugal, who, received as Queen, was then actually residing in England; it was said to be an armed interference in favour of Don Miguel, at the very moment when we pretended that our strict neutrality allowed no interference at all. The defence of the British government devolved on Mr. Peel. He replied to Sir James Macintosh in the following manly terms:—

“I indulge the hope of being able to satisfy the House, that the course pursued with respect to Portugal, has not only been in conformity to the strict principle of engagements—not only in conformity to the moral responsibility which England has incurred, but that it is better calculated to provide for the continuance of tranquillity, than that which, judging by his arguments and observations, the right honourable gentleman would have been disposed to recommend with regard to the kingdom of Portugal. I admit with the right honourable gentleman the antiquity of the relations subsisting between this country and Portugal. I admit that they have continued almost without interruption for four hundred and fifty years; and although the right honourable gentleman said, that on three occasions Portugal was subjected to invasion in consequence of its adherence to England, yet, I beg to remind the House, that England has not been backward in advancing to the succour of Portugal, and that the history of no country exhibits more proofs of the part taken by a powerful state to protect any kingdom in its interests and independence. The Portuguese

are well entitled to the name of ancient allies: the inhabitants of the respective countries have united their arms in many fields, and almost always in fields of victory. The question now to be considered is, whether treaties exist imposing on Great Britain any obligation which of late has not been fulfilled; or whether any obligation imposes on her a duty to be fulfilled when called on by an appeal for further interference."

Mr. Peel then entered into an elaborate review of all the events which had occurred in Portugal, relating to the succession of Donna Maria. He obviously felt that he was provoking a very disadvantageous comparison with Mr. Canning's unrivalled and triumphant oration on the same subject, and that the cold calculations of diplomacy were a sordid contrast to the fervid enthusiasm of his illustrious and deceased rival. This consciousness weighed him down; he was tame and spiritless during the greater part of his speech, though undoubtedly he had the best of the argument, for the armament had been fitted out in a British port, and was designed to act hostilely against Don Miguel, with whom England was not at war, for we still had a consul in Portugal. That the first destination of the armament was the island of Terceira, which owned allegiance to Donna Maria, scarcely made any difference, for the squadron could not be intended to defend an island which had recently repelled a Miguelite invasion. Still English sympathies were enlisted warmly in favour of Donna Maria, and though Mr. Peel may have felt that his case was not doubtful, he could not hide from himself that it was very unpopular.

Towards the close of his speech he rallied his powers, and delivered the peroration with great effect:—

"I will now leave the House," said he, "to decide whether the government of England is not right in preventing its manifest intention from being defeated by false clearances

and false assurances. These are the facts of the case, and I am satisfied that the character of England has been vindicated by not allowing its ports to be made subservient to such designs. These are the principles upon which government has acted. The officer who has been intrusted with the naval expedition to Terceira, has acted with the utmost moderation. He gave ample warning; and it was not until a passage was attempted to be forced that he reluctantly fired a shot, which killed one man, and wounded another. Having now given the explanations which the right honourable gentleman has required, I come to his motion. It is impossible not to acknowledge the forbearance of the House with regard to the discussion of foreign affairs—a forbearance dictated by a sense of the delicacy of interfering with pending negociations, and prejudging measures; yet I have no hesitation in saying, that I am perfectly prepared to acquiesce in the motion of the right honourable gentleman; and probably the right honourable gentleman, instead of confining it to a call for certain papers, will allow his motion to stand as it appeared in the notice-paper—‘for copies or extracts of communications concerning the relations between this country and her most faithful majesty the Queen of Portugal,’ and I assure him, that every paper connected with the Queen of Portugal, which it is consistent with the duty of ministers to produce, shall be most readily given.”

The close of this important session was followed by a short season of political lassitude. Every one seemed weary of the perplexities of party, and no one had more reason to be so than Mr. Peel, on whom the whole weight of ministerial responsibility in the House of Commons had devolved, and who had therefore to endure all the hostility of the friends he had abandoned, and the cause he had deserted.

CHAPTER III.

THE EFFECTS OF EMANCIPATION IN IRELAND, AND OF THE
RELAXATION OF PROTECTION IN ENGLAND.

THE act which disfranchised the forty-shilling freeholders of Ireland, provided that a new registration of those voters who retained their qualifications should take place as early as possible. This important business was conducted as rapidly as the forms of the statute would allow, and it produced a very serious change in the list of electors throughout the Irish counties. The notices of claims were less numerous than had been generally anticipated, and of these not more than a third could be substantiated. Hence the counties seemed again to be restored to the aristocracy and the ascendancy in Ireland. At this crisis, Mr. O'Connell presented himself for re-election to the constituency of the county of Clare. So soon as a vote of the House of Commons had ordered a new election for that county, he addressed a long and most intemperate letter to the electors, in which he assailed Peel and Wellington with a vindictive virulence, for which it is impossible to offer excuse or apology. He averred that Catholic rights and liberties were in danger of being "sapped and undermined by the insidious policy of those men who, *false to their own party, can never be true to us*—and who have yielded not to reason, but to necessity, in granting us freedom of conscience." It was in fact a manifesto of spiteful hostility against the British government, couched in language calculated to stimulate the worst

passions, and gratify the worst prejudices, of the vulgar, but equally calculated to disgust every man of proper feeling and ordinary common sense.

An aggregate meeting of the Catholics was held in Dublin, where it was resolved that £5,000 out of the funds of the late Catholic Association should be given to Mr. O'Connell, to defray the expenses of his re-election. But this election excited no interest, for it was unopposed. Want of opposition did not allay O'Connell's wrath, or abate his virulence; he delivered the most violent speeches to the crowds which assembled to celebrate his return, speeches in which the vilest personality was mixed with the grossest buffoonery. He then made a tour of agitation through the south of Ireland, in which he announced his intention to commence a new agitation for the Repeal of the Union, and descended to the most disgraceful artifices for the purpose of exciting the national and religious prejudices of the lower classes of Irishmen against the people of England.

The Catholic aristocracy and gentry of Ireland viewed these proceedings with equal disgust and dismay. Had the ministers appealed to them, and given earnest of their sincerity not to allow the Emancipation act to become a dead letter, they would almost unanimously have declared in favour of the government, and the new agitation would have been at once confined to the lowest rabble. But they believed, not without some show of reason, that the Orange party was still powerful at the Castle, and that their aid, if tendered, would have been contumeliously rejected. These feelings of exasperation were much strengthened by the perseverance of the Orangemen in celebrating the 12th of July, the anniversary of the battle of Aughrim. The Catholics resolved to oppose this commemoration of the defeat of their party, wherever they could muster sufficient force; several collisions took place in consequence; several lives were

lost, and nothing but the presence of the military prevented open war.

On no topic did Mr. O'Connell dwell more earnestly and more mischievously than on the administration of justice in Ireland; he used all his powers, and unfortunately with success, to persuade the deluded peasantry that the law existed only to be used against them, and that the entire judicial system was only contrived to inflict on them injury and wrong. Hence the peasants took the task of retribution for some real, and more imaginary injuries, into their own hands, and assumed arms to gratify revenge in defiance of the law. "The wild justice of revenge," as Mr. O'Connell delicately described it, was so very wild, that no man, however benevolent, or however patriotic, could deem himself safe from its operations. Life, in Tipperary, where this demoralization was at its highest, depended on the caprice of a set of ruffians, who, under various nicknames, assumed the office of midnight legislators. Judges, juries, and the government, were equally set at nought by those criminals, against whom no witness dared to communicate what he might know.

One illustration of this "reign of terror" will suffice. A gentleman named Chadwick, who was said to have acted very harshly as an agent, and to have superadded bitter insult to cruel injury, was doomed to die by the secret tribunal of the Whiteboys. The task of execution was entrusted to Patrick Grace, a young farmer in tolerably comfortable circumstances, and who had no personal cause of dislike to his unfortunate victim. Chadwick was walking on the public road in company with a mason named Mara, in the middle of the day, when Grace and another came up, deliberately shot him dead, and coolly walked away. Mara gave information, and appeared as a witness against Grace at the following assizes. A clearer case of guilt hardly ever

came before a court; Grace was convicted, sentenced, and executed. To save Mara from the threatened vengeance of the Whiteboys, he was sent by the government to a distant part of Ireland, but "the wild justice of revenge" was not to be thus disappointed; the Whiteboy tribunal resolved on the murder of Mara's brothers, and even of their apprentices. For more than a fortnight, these doomed men were watched by the assassins; every one around them, friends and neighbours, knew that their doom had been pronounced, but such terror had the Whiteboy system inspired, that no one dared to give them the slightest warning. At length, as they were returning from work, they fell into the ambush where eight assassins lay concealed, and two of them were murdered. For a long time rewards were vainly offered for information; at length, Fitzgerald and Ryan, two of the assassins, were arrested for another crime, and turned approvers to obtain a pardon. The murderers and their accomplices were arrested; six of them were hanged, and as many more transported for life. The gang was now thoroughly daunted; Fitzgerald and Ryan were in the hands of the government, and they knew enough to guide the officers of justice to the probable perpetrators of any future outrage. This is no solitary instance of the "reign of terror" established by the midnight legislators; and such a system could never have been continued, had not the confidence of the people in the administration of the law been deliberately destroyed by O'Connell.

It is not meant to assert that O'Connell sanctioned these crimes; on the contrary, he lamented and denounced them: it is not asserted that political agitation was the source of these predial outrages; the wretches by whom these crimes were perpetrated, cared little either for politics or religion; still it is not the less true, that the unhappy course taken by Mr. O'Connell, in his rage at being rejected by the House

of Commons, gave a strength and permanency to the White-boy system, which it could not otherwise have attained. His feeling when rejected, was that of personal insult; he thought that he had been contemned by the British parliament, and he was resolved to show that he possessed a power in Ireland which was not to be mocked with impunity. His exasperation was increased by the share which Mr. Peel had in procuring his rejection; the remembrance of the abortive duel with that gentleman when Secretary for Ireland, rankled in his memory, for though Mr. Peel himself does not appear to have imputed cowardice to O'Connell on the occasion, there were others who did so very frequently; and it may be questioned, whether O'Connell himself was not troubled with a lurking conviction that the imputation was not wholly unfounded.

Another circumstance which contributed not a little to the unhappy course taken by Mr. O'Connell, was indignation at finding that the Catholic aristocracy and gentry were not disposed to give him the exclusive merit of having achieved emancipation, but, on the contrary, seemed rather inclined to deny him his fair share of merit. Injudicious flatterers had bestowed on him the proud name of "The Liberator," and an excusable vanity urged him to adopt the most efficient means for securing the title. This seemed most likely to be achieved by a new agitation; unfortunately, that agitation had a social, as well as a political character. Indeed, its political objects were from the first vague and undefined, while its social results were tangible and practical.

To such an extent had outrages proceeded in the county of Tipperary, that a meeting of magistrates was held in the month of September, to petition for a renewal of the Insurrection act. Lord Llandaff, the chairman of the meeting, had been a zealous advocate of Catholic emancipation, and no man ever lived, more anxious to redress the wrongs

of the Irish peasantry. But "the reign of terror" had alarmed him, as indeed it had all the gentry, Protestant and Catholic; and he joined in representing to the government, that bodies of armed men appeared at noon-day for the purpose of obstructing the execution of the laws, and threatening the lives and properties of all who attempted to oppose their illegal proceedings—that it was impossible to obtain information to convict the offenders, owing to a league of false honour, which pecuniary temptation could not conquer, or a system of terror which served the same purpose by the dread of a violent death. As parliament was not sitting, the Insurrection act, which had been allowed to expire, could not be renewed, but the number of military posts in the county was increased, and the army was held in constant readiness to assist the civil power.

Much of this evil would have been avoided, but for the paltry exclusion of O'Connell from his seat: the pride of being the first Catholic allowed to sit in parliament for nearly two centuries would have satisfied his craving desire for fame; and the share he would have taken in the labours of the session would have sent him back to Ireland disinclined to encounter the toils of agitation. By the perverse course adopted, the Catholics appeared to be at once emancipated and insulted, ungraciously admitted to political privilege, and unfairly excluded from political power.

The reduction of the wages of the silk-weavers, the necessary consequence of the depression of trade, produced some lawless excesses in London, Macclesfield, Coventry, and some parts of Yorkshire. Tranquillity was, however, soon restored by the promptitude and firmness of the government; and Mr. Peel's conduct as Home Secretary proved that his course of policy was not only more merciful and benevolent than that which Lord Sidmouth had pursued, but also more efficient and more certain.

During the summer some attempts were made to give fresh strength to the cabinet: Earl Rosslyn, a whig, was already in the cabinet; and Sir James Scarlett, who belonged to the same party, had become attorney-general, in the place of Sir Charles Wetherell; but some anxiety was felt to obtain the support of Earl Grey, if it were found possible to overcome the personal hostility of George IV. to that venerated nobleman. This, however, proved an insurmountable obstacle, and some offers were made to Lord Palmerston. He refused to join any ministry which was not prepared to bring forward some measure of parliamentary reform; a circumstance which deserves to be made known, as Lord Palmerston has been unjustly accused of having been converted to the cause of reform by the offer of a place in Earl Grey's administration.

The cabinet, left to its original weakness at home, received no small injury from the change of ministry in France. Charles X., a despot and a bigot, dismissed his constitutional advisers, and placed Prince Polignac at the head of his government. The prince, who had long been viewed with jealousy, as an ultra-royalist, and a member of the Jesuit Congregation, surrounded himself with colleagues still more unpopular, and prepared to direct affairs in opposition to the almost unanimous voice of the people of France. He commenced a series of prosecutions against the press, as his ministry was denounced by all the leading journals both of Paris and the provinces, and he dismissed from office all subordinates who showed favour to popular opinions. It was said, that this re-action against revolutionary principles in France was viewed with complacency, if not with favour, by the Wellington cabinet; and though this imputation was groundless, it was very industriously circulated, and met far more credence than the ministers ever suspected. A lurking fear that the Duke of Wellington's military habits

and associations would lead him to revert to the principles of the Holy Alliance, had derived some strength from the interception of the Portuguese squadron at Terceira, and was further confirmed by the duke's asserting, in a casual debate at the close of the session, that public opinion in Portugal was decidedly in favour of the usurper, Don Miguel. The liberal party, which in the beginning of 1829 had shown a strong anxiety to support the Wellington administration, was quite alienated from it before the close of the year; while the supporters of Protestant ascendancy obstinately persisted in refusing to forgive the unkind desertion of their ancient leaders.

The weakness of the English cabinet at home was marked by the waning of our influence abroad. For nearly two years the ambassadors of France and England had vainly urged the Sultan to recognize the independence of Greece, and to accept their mediation with the Russian emperor, whose armies had invaded Turkey. The Sultan obstinately refused all offers of accommodation, relying on the fanaticism of his subjects, which he had himself destroyed by attempting their civilisation. He issued orders to all the governors of his extensive dominions, to send their contingents to the army; but the orders were not obeyed. He had himself taken up his quarters in the camp near his capital, to forward the levies, to accelerate the discipline, and to excite the spirit of his troops; but without effect. The standard of the prophet had been unfurled, without causing any warlike enthusiasm in the Mussulmans; and a proclamation, commanding the faithful to lay aside the habiliments of peace, to assume the uniform of soldiers, and to repel the invaders, brought no fresh forces. While he was thus fruitlessly employed, a Russian army forced the mountain-passes of the Balkan, hitherto deemed the impregnable barrier of the Turkish empire, and took possession of Adrianople, without

striking a blow, though the city was garrisoned by two pachas and ten thousand men. Constantinople itself was in danger; its only defence was an old and ruinous line of wall; the greater part of the troops which usually formed its garrison had been sent to Asia; a conspiracy against the Sultan was on the point of exploding in the city; and while the Russian army was preparing to advance from Adrianople, the naval armaments of Russia had appeared in the Bosphorus. Utterly helpless, the Sultan applied to the European ambassadors, whose proposals he had previously rejected; and through the intervention of Baron Muffling, the Prussian minister, a treaty was concluded at Adrianople, which was nothing better than a capitulation. This treaty added immensely to the character, resources, and influence of Russia; while it almost blotted out Turkey from the map of independent states. It was the more remarkable still, that from stopping short of the Turkish capital, the Russian emperor obtained the credit of moderation in the midst of victory.

The vacillating policy adopted by England towards Grece, after the battle of Navarino, reflected very little credit on the Wellington administration, and enabled Russia to win the reputation of having procured the recognition of the independence of that classic land. France and England united with Russia in arranging the government of the new state; it was agreed that it should be formed into a monarchy, and that the crown should be tendered to Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg, who has since obtained a much more desirable kingdom in Belgium. Though the prince had actually sought this offer, yet it was no sooner made, than he seemed anxious to invent every kind of excuse for rejecting it. A tedious correspondence with the Earl of Aberdeen ensued, in which the prince, under the guidance of Lord Durham, triumphed over his antagonists in diplomacy; it ended by his final refusal of

the Greek crown in May, 1830, and the blame of this unpopular result was thrown upon the ministry.

Another source of ministerial unpopularity, was the vindictive course pursued by Sir James Scarlett in the prosecution of the editor and proprietors of the *Morning Journal*. The part which ministers had taken in regard to Catholic emancipation, laid them peculiarly open to attack, and the *Morning Journal* assailed them without mercy. The consequence was that Sir James Scarlett resolved to strain the law to the utmost, in order to crush the paper: no less than three criminal informations were filed against the editor and proprietors, besides an indictment which was preferred by the Duke of Wellington. All the cases were tried together, and verdicts were obtained against the defendants on three of them. They were called up for judgment on the 4th of February, 1830; and the sentence pronounced on Mr. Alexander was regarded by the public as marked by excessive and unnecessary severity. As parliament assembled on the very same day, it was considered ominous that the session should commence with what seemed to be an attempt to stifle discussion.

The royal speech touched lightly on the distress of the country, which it described as temporary and partial. This extenuation of the crisis provoked sharp debates on the address in both Houses of Parliament. Earl Stanhope moved an amendment, and, in bitter terms, accused the ministry of vacillation and supineness. He was supported by the Duke of Richmond, and the Earls of Carnarvon and Winchilsea. The government was defended by Lord Goderich, the leader of the Canning party; by the Marquis of Lansdowne, as chief of the Whigs; and by the Duke of Wellington. His Grace made a lamentable exhibition of ignorance of the plainest elements of political economy. He attributed the distressed state of manufactures to competition

at home and abroad, to improvements in machinery, and to the introduction of steam-power in the place of manual labour; but he successfully exposed the absurdity of those who attributed the commercial derangement to Peel's measure for restoring a metallic currency. The amendment was rejected by a majority of seventy-one to nine.

In the Commons the battle was much more fierce, and the victory of the ministers far less satisfactory. The address was moved by Lord Darlington, the eldest son of the Duke of Cleveland, who, by his borough influence, had long been one of the most powerful leaders of the Whig party. His lordship assigned, as a reason for supporting the ministry, that it was "a Tory administration acting on Whig principles." An amendment was moved by Sir Edward Knatchbull, the Tory member for Kent, and it was supported by members of very different parties—by Messrs. Western, Protheroe, Davenport, Maberly, Duncombe, Palmer, Waithman, and O'Connell. Mr. Huskisson, as head of the Canning party, joined in the opposition, on the ground that the facts of the distress were more correctly stated in the amendment than in the address. This course was not expected by Mr. Secretary Peel, and he replied to Huskisson with considerable asperity. Lord Althorp and Mr. Brougham, on the part of the Whigs, declared that they would vote against ministers. When the House divided, there appeared for Sir E. Knatchbull's amendment 105, against it, 158; giving to the ministers a majority of 53. More than seventy of this minority belonged to the old Tory party, by which Peel had been raised to power; on the other hand, the ministerial majority was swelled by several members of the regular opposition, and among these the most conspicuous were Mr. Hume and Sir Francis Burdett.

In a subsequent debate, when an amendment in favour of parliamentary reform was proposed by the Marquis of Bland-

ford, Sir Francis Burdett took an opportunity of warning the Wellington and Peel ministry that it ought not to rely too confidently on the unconditional support of the liberal party. "I feel considerable alarm," he said, "about the management of the country's affairs, from what has passed in another place, of which we all, I believe, have some knowledge: when I have seen the prime minister display what, to my mind, are a total apathy and insensibility to, and a complete unacquaintance with, the interests of the country, with a disposition not to acknowledge the difficulties and distress now existing; but, on the contrary, with a disposition to stifle all complaints and inquiry, and to persuade the public that the universal calamity which is felt in every part of the country is only partial, temporary, and slight—of a nature to cure itself, and not requiring the attention of the legislature. I feel alarm when I know that this distress is attributed to improvement in our machinery—to the application of steam—and to those other ingenious contrivances, to which all scientific men justly attribute the prosperity of the country;—when I see that an opinion of this nature is entertained by the prime minister, whatever respect I may have for the noble duke's qualifications in the field, (and no man has a greater respect,) I can form no other opinion of him, as a minister of the crown, than he himself had formed a short time, a little month, I believe, before the noble duke accepted his present situation; when he said—in language to which I hardly know how to allude—that he should consider himself destitute of common reason, and fit only for a lunatic asylum, if he should entertain the idea of filling the office of prime-minister. The noble duke may not then have done justice to himself; but after such opinions, I can hardly dissent from the fitness of the language he used, and that it is not required to form a different opinion of the noble duke's qualifications."

After exposing some other errors into which the Duke of

Wellington had fallen, Sir Francis Burdett continued :—
“These things show me that it is necessary for the House of Commons not to place too much confidence in the prime minister who can make such statements. We have long forborne; out of tenderness to the noble duke, to scrutinize his measures, regarding the noble duke as the means of conferring the greatest benefit on this country which ever a man had conferred; and which he only, of all the men of England, could have carried into effect, producing the greatest amelioration in our situation; but let it be remembered that if the services were great, the benefits were commensurate. The noble duke has been amply repaid in returns of confidence and approbation; but after what we have heard, the confidence that has been bestowed on the noble duke must be resumed; we must have confidence in ourselves, for the time has come when many other things must be done. The country cannot stand still. Not half a century ago, there was no hope of carrying that measure which has now providentially been carried; I say providentially, considering that it has been brought about by means which surpassed all expectation, and seemed not within the ordinary scope of human means; but the state of the country has become such, that doing justice cannot be longer deferred, and the government has no other choice than to do justice, or involve the country in civil contentions. I give due credit to the noble duke, that he was sensible to the alteration which has taken place; and that if he had adopted any other measure, the government could not be carried on, unless by means that all must shudder to contemplate.”

Mr. Peel made a very feeble effort to defend his colleague from this severe but merited reprobation. He insisted that the duke had been misunderstood, and that his observations were only intended to apply to the effect of the introduction of power-looms on the condition of the hand-loom weavers.

Such an injudicious defence only added to the force of the accusation.

Another of Mr. Peel's colleagues increased the difficulties and perplexities of the cabinet by his questionable interference with the administration of justice in India. Lord Ellenborough, the President of the Board of Control, addressed an unfortunate letter to Sir John Malcolm, the Governor of Bombay, respecting a dispute which had arisen between the government and the Supreme Court of that presidency, regarding the jurisdiction of the latter. The three judges of the Bombay court were of opinion that their powers extended in certain cases over all Hindoo subjects, at whatever distance from the presidency they might reside. Sir John Malcolm and his council were of opinion that this assumption of jurisdiction was a usurpation contrary to the statutes by which the court was established, and they further feared that it might lead to a dangerous interference with the rights and opinions of the natives. To bring this question to an issue, the judges, in conformity with their views, issued process; but the government prohibited and prevented its execution until the question should be settled by the Privy Council. While the matter was under discussion, two of the judges of the court died, and Sir J. P. Grant alone remained. The Privy Council decided that the Supreme Court had exceeded its powers; and at the same time that this decision was communicated to the presidency, two new judges were appointed. On the occasion of this appointment, Lord Ellenborough addressed a very injudicious and ill-written letter to Sir John Malcolm, the purport of which was to show that the government was above the court; that the new judges would manifest no troublesome wish to embarrass the government; and if Sir J. P. Grant should still be inclined to be refractory, that "he would be like a wild elephant between two tame ones."

By some improper disclosure, a copy of this letter reached England, and was published in the newspapers. The opposition in both Houses assailed it as an unwarrantable infringement on the independence of the judges, and an attempt to render them subservient to the government. No special motion was made regarding the matter; but as Lord Ellenborough was generally unpopular, and was believed to have no better qualification for office than the personal favour of the Duke of Wellington, opportunity was taken of his awkward expressions to tease him and embarrass the government.

This embarrassment was the more unpleasant, as the approaching term of the company's charter rendered it necessary to take measures for the future government of India. The ministers, unwilling to take the responsibility of an arrangement affecting such varied and important interests, resolved to have a preliminary inquiry before a parliamentary committee, and the proposal was made in the House of Commons on the 9th of February, by Mr. Secretary Peel, in the following statesmanlike form:—

“His Majesty's government has felt it to be their duty to avail themselves of the very earliest opportunity to redeem the pledge which they gave at the close of the last session of parliament, that as soon as possible after the commencement of the present session, they would themselves propose a committee of inquiry for the purpose of investigating the state of the commerce between this country and our India possessions. And if, in proposing that committee, my statement should appear disproportionate to the vast importance of the subject, or if I forbear from entering on the present occasion into the manifold and most interesting details which are necessarily mixed up with it, I beg it to be understood, that I take that course, not from any insensibility to the paramount greatness of the question, but from a recollection of the peculiar position in which I stand this night, and from

a strong feeling of the duty which is placed before us, and which the public expect we shall perform with calmness and caution. I do not consider that it is part of my duty to submit to this House, on the present occasion, the consideration of any plan for the future government of India—that it is any part of my duty to state the opinion of his majesty's ministers, as to the renewal of the present East India charter, or to point out any modification which might be made in the existing system by which India is governed: I trust that we will come to-night to a calm and dispassionate inquiry into the propriety of appointing a committee to examine into this great question, leaving the details to future consideration, when the committee shall have stated its opinion. I consider that to be the only question before us: I feel that this is an inquiry which will impose on us higher obligations with reference to moral feeling, than almost any other in the whole sphere of public affairs; and therefore I do not wish to agitate the ultimate question precipitately.

“I have also another motive for avoiding, if I can, the discussion of the details of this question, because it is not my plan to have a lengthened debate on mere opinions relative to Indian affairs. I hope, in the first instance, that the subject will receive the most serious consideration of a committee—a consideration worthy of the importance and dignity of the question at issue. I mean to propose one general committee for the purpose of examining the great mass of documentary evidence that is ready to be submitted to the House, and also to enter on a faithful examination of persons who are conversant with all the facts connected with the situation of India, and who possess local information with respect to the commerce carried on with that country. I propose one committee, rather than two or three committees, because I doubt

whether the subjects to be considered are not so closely connected together that the evidence on one point may tend to elucidate another, and therefore it appears to me better that the whole should be laid before one body, instead of thus dividing the subject amongst many. I think if one committee is appointed to inquire into the finance of India, another to look into the trade of India, and another to take into consideration the commerce with China, that much inconvenience would ensue.

“The subjects are so nearly connected, that I fear, if such a course should be pursued, much confusion will be the consequence. If the plan proposed by the honourable member for Callington, (Mr. Baring,) be followed,—namely, that of having two or three committees—it will not, in my opinion, answer the purpose. Such an arrangement, I conceive, would be bad. If two or three committees are appointed, there is a very great chance of the House being bewildered, amongst various conflicting opinions from the different committees. I propose this committee, with the plain and honest view of having a full, perfect, and unreserved investigation with respect to the affairs of the East India Company.

“Every document connected with the trade, with the commerce, and with the finance of India, shall be laid before that committee. I propose this committee, not for the purpose of ratifying any engagement previously existing between the government and the company. In fact, no such engagement, open or secret, express or implied, exists. The government, in the fullest sense of the language, are free agents. I repeat, that I do not propose this committee with a view to the sanctioning of any previous engagement with the government. No such thing is in existence, and in any future proceedings, the ministers are desirous of being guided according to the result of the inquiry. As

there was no such irrevocable engagement on the part of the government—as the whole subject was open to investigation—I feel myself entitled to impress on the House the extreme importance of the inquiry into this great question.”

After some brief observations on the nature and amount of the interests at stake, and the expectations raised in the public mind, he continued :—

“Among the other considerations which will present themselves to this committee, I have reserved for the last plan that which appears to me to be the most important—the welfare and interests of those who are now subject to the dominion of this country; I have seen returns, which make the amount of the native population immediately subject to the control of this country not less than ninety millions of persons. When we consider the extent of territory over which our power is acknowledged—when we consider the enormous mass of population subject to our dominion—when we call to mind the great revolution of empires by which that dominion has been established—when we reflect on the immense distance from which sovereign authority over those regions is exercised—when we call to mind the difference in language, manners, religion, and usages, between ourselves and the almost countless thousands over whom we govern, the mind cannot fail to be amazed at the contemplation of objects so vast and various. But whatever may be the sentiments we entertain on the question, sure I am, at least, that we must approach the consideration of it with a deep feeling, with a strong sense of the responsibility we shall incur—with a strong sense of the moral obligation which imposes it upon us as a duty to promote the improvement of the country, and the welfare and well-being of its inhabitants, so far as we can, consistently with the safety and security of our dominion, and the obligations by which we may be bound. We shall undoubtedly feel ourselves called

upon to consider what are the measures that may best tend to protect the natives of those distant regions from wrong—to secure to them their personal liberty and the fruits of their industry; in a word, to endeavour, while we still keep them under British rule, to atone to them for the sufferings they endured, and the wrongs to which they were exposed, in being reduced to that rule; and to afford them such advantages, and confer on them such benefits, as may in some degree console them for the loss of their independence.

“These, sir, are considerations which, whatever may be the anxiety to extend British conquest, and to maintain the rights of British subjects, must indisputably be entertained in a British parliament. Avoiding then, sir, all minute reference to subordinate details, however important—unwilling to touch upon any topic that may provoke discussion, which, for the reasons I have already stated, I am anxious to avert—I have cautiously refrained from mooted any point upon which there could be any conflict of opinion.”

The committee was of course appointed, and its labours were continued to the end of the session. But it was not in Indian affairs alone, that Lord Ellenborough caused some embarrassment, and much greater unpopularity to the government; the bill for divorcing him from Lady Ellenborough was resisted within the walls of parliament, and was almost universally reprobated out of doors. There was no doubt that the unfortunate lady, who was young, beautiful, amiable, and accomplished, had been engaged in a criminal intrigue with Prince Schwartzburg; but on the face of the evidence it appeared that Lord Ellenborough had been, to say the least, a very careless husband, and rumours were afloat that his lady's misconduct had resulted from many and gross provocations. It was a suspicious circumstance that his lordship had not sought the usual redress of an injured

husband in a court of common law, but had avoided submitting his conduct to the scrutiny of a jury; and the mode in which the Divorce bill was conducted in the House of Lords, was subject to an imputation of collision between the parties, which, though we know now to have been groundless, was not at the time destitute of some appearance of probability. Some calumniators went so far as to insinuate that Lord Ellenborough had connived at his own dishonour; and though such a charge was equally infamous and unfounded, it received enough of credence to secure for the degraded wife a large share of public sympathy, and to excite an equal amount of indignation against the imprudent husband. It was blazoned in all the papers, that no one but a cabinet minister could have obtained a divorce under such circumstances; and public opinion stigmatized the ministers for having exerted all their parliamentary influence to perpetrate an act of immorality and injustice. Looking calmly back at the transaction, we think that both Lord Ellenborough and the ministry were very harshly treated; and so far from it being advantageous to his lordship to have held office at the crisis, we think that but for this very circumstance, the Divorce bill would have passed with far less of comment, and far less of difficulty.

No session of parliament was more occupied with debates on the state of the country, than that of 1830: besides a multitude of incidental discussions arising out of the presentation of petitions, the entire subject was brought before the House of Lords by the Duke of Richmond; no new light, however, was thrown upon the subject by the speeches of any of their lordships, and the appointment of a useless committee was negatived by a majority of 141 to 61.

The same subject was discussed in the House of Commons on the motion of Mr. E. Davenport; the debate was protracted through four nights, during which about fifty speakers

delivered their sentiments, and uttered a body of doctrine and declamation, which would more than fill this volume. Mr. Davenport, and those who sided with him in the debate, suggested, as a remedy for the existing distress, an alteration in the currency. The currency rested on two bases; one of them Peel's act, which had restored a gold currency;—the other, the later measure, which prohibited a paper currency in notes of less value than five pounds. It was proposed to change this system by conjoining silver with gold in the standard, and by permitting the issue of small notes.

The only speech which deserves to be rescued from the mass of common-places, errors, or prejudices, which compose the report of the four days' discussion on the state of the country in the House of Commons, is that of a statesman whose loss the country will long deplore; who for many years guided its commercial policy; whose profound acquaintance with economical science kept him from attempting empirical changes, by enabling him to see the ultimate effect of every measure which he proposed; whose comprehensive capacity enabled him to master the most perplexing details of business, and to apply ascertained general principles to the most intricate questions of practice; whose caution was equal to his knowledge, and who, moreover, possessed the rare faculty of being able in the senate perspicuously and eloquently to explain and defend the improvements in our commercial system, which his sagacity and long experience had suggested in office;—we mean Mr. Huskisson. This speech was afterwards published by the right honourable gentleman himself; and therefore contains his deliberate opinions on the great questions to which it refers. It represents the changes in the currency as the great, though not the only source of our difficulties; but it opposes any new change, as likely to produce greater derangement. In going further into the subject, the right honourable gentleman

called the attention of the House to the following propositions, which our space will not allow us to develop :—

1. "That there was too great a pressure, by taxation, on the springs and sources of productive industry; and that the portion of its fruits reserved for reproduction are less than they ought to be, either for the well-being of the labouring classes, or the due maintenance and growth of capital.

2. "That the weight of the public burdens (their nominal amount remaining the same) must be severely felt in proportion as the money incomes derived from trading, farming, and manufacturing capital and industry, are diminished by the change in the currency.

3. "That in the distribution of the annual wealth of the country, according to its ordinary admitted division, into rent, profits of stock, and wages of labour, the two latter have not their fair share, owing to taxation and other causes. In illustrating this proposition, Mr. Huskisson indicated a series of reductions in the amount, and changes in the system of taxation, which have since been brought into successful operation by Sir Robert Peel.

4. "That the peace has diminished the profits of our foreign trade, by giving us competitors in foreign markets, and therefore that it should be a leading object of commercial legislation to enable our manufacturers to meet such competitors on equal terms."

The effect of this admirable and statesmanlike speech, was equally decisive in the House, and with the nation. The motion was negatived by a majority of 225 to 87; chiefly on the ground, that by granting the committee, expectations would be held out of unsettling the currency, in favour of which the House had already voted eight times; and thus increasing, instead of alleviating, the distresses of the country.

Much greater interest was excited by the propositions made for reducing taxation, and curtailing the public expen-

diture. Sir James Graham, who was rapidly rising in public estimation as a practical statesman and efficient debater, moved for the reduction of all the salaries paid to official persons; he stated as his ground for this proposal, that subsequently to Mr. Pitt's Bank Restriction act, all salaries had been increased, because of the greater expense of living consequent on the depreciation of the currency, and the rise of prices; therefore, as the restriction had been removed, and we had returned to cash payments, it was only just that salaries should be reduced to their former level. This was evidently a very strong case; and the honourable baronet established it with singular ability, preserving through his entire address a moderation of tone which added greatly to the cogency and effect of his argument. Rarely has there been a historical and statistical detail so lucid in its arrangement, so perfect in its statements, and possessing such cohesion by the skilful interweaving of reasoning with facts. It was a speech which at once placed Sir James Graham in the rank of the most eminent leaders of the opposition, and justified his assumption of authority in stating the view which the liberal body generally had begun to take of the Wellington administration; a view which was fast becoming that of the nation at large, displeased with its system of party exclusion, and its very inadequate amount of talent.

"I am not," said the honourable baronet, "one of those who viewed without the utmost jealousy, in 1828, the elevation of the Duke of Wellington to the highest office in the state. I had observed with deep regret, his opposition to the government of Mr. Canning, stated to proceed from an irreconcilable difference with respect to the Catholic question; and differing from the honourable member for the county of Hertford (Sir J. Seabright), I did not think that a military education was the best preparation for a statesman seeking

to administer the affairs of a free people. I remembered what the historian had said, that he who had been trained amidst arms, and had obtained a consummate knowledge of his art, might be disposed to transfer to the cabinet the doctrines of the camp—and recognize no submission but implicit obedience. A little reflection, however, led me to hope that he who had acquired a knowledge of the people in every clime, and under circumstances of danger—who had never failed to lead them on to victory—must, more than any other, respect that nation whom he had proved to be the lords of human kind. I was not altogether disappointed in these expectations. In the first session, the noble Duke supported a bill for the repeal of the Test and Corporation acts, which had been introduced by a noble friend of mine (Lord John Russell), who thereby added another to the many obligations which the people of this country are under to his family. He also conferred the merited honour of his profession upon a distinguished barrister (Mr. Denman), an ornament to this House, whom I should again wish to see amongst us. In the last session, he carried a measure which Mr. Pitt declared to be the key-stone of the Union; which Fox, though he ably advocated, never ventured to bring forward; which hurled from power Grey and Grenville, because they attempted to bring it forward; which Grattan, the warm-hearted champion of the Irish, would have died to accomplish; which, because Mr. Canning could not accomplish, he died from chagrin and despair—so deeply did he feel the effects of bitter calumny and gnawing care.

“This bolder minister, however, (nothing daunted by the fall of his predecessors) effected a religious peace on the solid base of equality of civil rights. All these are great obligations; but political gratitude is short-lived. Events press upon events—day by day we are called upon for decision—we cannot, we must not lag behind. If the fundholder,

the political economist, the lawyer, Whig and Tory, are to rally under the banners of the Wellington government, the time is come when, on the part of the tax-payer, it is necessary to form another party, to reduce the burdens of the country. The noble Duke has a receipt for destroying party. He takes Lord Rosslyn from one party, an attorney-general (Sir James Scarlett) from the ranks of the old opposition, a cursitor baron of the exchequer from the ranks of the Danai, and he then drops amongst the traders to pick out a tame elephant for the Board of Control."

Mr. G. R. Dawson, the brother-in-law of Mr. Peel, replied to Sir James Graham, and dwelt at great length on the large reductions which had been made in the expenditure, since the conclusion of the war. Mr. Croker corroborated this statement; but, well aware that the motion and the debate were calculated to embarrass the march and weaken the hands of the government, he endeavoured to give a new turn to the discussion, by introducing the subject of the currency. This was defeated by Mr. Spring Rice (since Lord Monteagle), who showed that the questions of currency and retrenchment were only so far connected as the depreciation of the currency had furnished an excuse for raising official salaries during the late war. Mr. M. A. Taylor took the same view of the case, and amused the House by the following anecdote, which he related as an illustration of the effects of war on the value of prices and stock.

"Towards the close of the late struggles in France," he said, "when Buonaparte had returned to France, though his return was not generally known, a farmer of some consideration, near Doncaster, was driving sixty pigs to market, and he met a man who asked him—'Have you heard the news?' 'No,' he replied—'I have heard no news—the war is over, and I am going to make the best bargain I can for my pigs.'—'Oh, Napoleon,' said the other, or 'Nap,' as he called

him, 'Nap is come back to France.'—'Is he indeed?' exclaimed the farmer, 'oh! then, I'll drive my pigs back again.'"

Peel, who spoke late in the debate, was manifestly conscious that Sir James Graham's denunciation of the Duke of Wellington indicated that the ministry held power by a precarious tenure. To the motion he offered little resistance, because it was understood that Sir James Graham did not intend to press for a division; but to the declaration of hostility, he replied—

"Sir, I am not conscious that there have been any accessions to the government, in which there has been any compromise of principle; and I confess, I see nothing disgraceful in a man, when he approves of the conduct and measures of government, giving that assistance which may tend to render those measures effectual for the service of the state. For those who compose his majesty's present administration, I may be permitted to say, that our intention is to persevere in performing that which we feel to be our duty to the country. We are aware of the state of party in this House, and are not ignorant of the consequences which may arise from the combination of parties here. But, let these consequences be what they may, it is our determination to pursue our path firmly and conscientiously. In the course of the last year we performed a great duty, by acting in contradiction to the opinions we had previously entertained, and the course which we had long thought it our duty to pursue. I then thought, and I do still believe, that that step was imposed upon us by a positive and overwhelming necessity, even though, by carrying it into effect, we forfeited the confidence and the attachment of many in this House. But, sir, I cannot now, even to conciliate the good-will of that party, or any member of it, say that I repent the step that we have taken. I solemnly declare, that subsequent events have con-

vinced me, that by that course we averted from the country great and awful calamities, the pressure of which would now be felt in aggravation of the distress which is described as universal and severe. Had parliament refused to grant that long-agitated question of Catholic emancipation, owing to our perseverance or obstinacy, or whatever other name may be given to it at this moment, Ireland and England would be in very different situations from what they now are. I firmly believe, that from the settlement of that question, have resulted greater benefits than I contemplated, and greater dangers have been averted than any one could have foreseen. There have certainly been individual acts of atrocity which were a disgrace to those concerned in them; but it is not from individual acts that we are to judge of the character or condition of a nation, nor can we form a just or accurate estimate from the exaggerated accounts of those acts of violence, even where they are not altogether destitute of foundation.

“But I see in the condition of that country the elements of future religious peace and national prosperity. The upper classes of society are falling into an oblivion of past animosities as rapidly as can be expected in so short a time, and the example of those classes is fast extending through the great body of society. Deeply as I regret the loss of the confidence which a portion of the members of this House have withdrawn from his majesty’s government, and clearly as I foresee the possible consequences which the combination of parties may lead to, I yet cannot purchase their confidence by expressing a regret for what has occurred. I say this with no feeling of hostility or asperity. I had, at the outset, a perfect knowledge of the painful consequences which might arise to me individually and in my public capacity, from proposing the measure of Catholic emancipation; but if the same juncture were again to occur—if the business were to

be transacted over again with still greater deliberation and determination, and with increased preparation to make any personal sacrifice that might be necessary, I would this very night give notice of a motion for the introduction of such a measure. Sir, we made that concession and that sacrifice for the public good alone ; but we have made, and we will make, no concession and no sacrifices for the purpose of maintaining ourselves in office. We will uphold the established institutions of the country with such salutary and well-considered reform as change of circumstances may render necessary, and so far as shall be consistent with the preservation of the permanent interests of the country. We will propose such measures of retrenchment as can be effected with advantage, but will propose none which cannot be maintained consistently with the honour and just influence of this nation ; and I say with confidence, but with perfect respect, that whatever may be the consequences of the combination of parties in this House, there is a sufficient fund of good sense prevailing in the country, without reference to ultra-Whig, or ultra-Tory, which will ultimately sanction and confirm the course that has been pursued, and which it is our intention to pursue."

He was, however, more severe when a similar motion was made at a later period by Mr. Hume, who spoke rather violently and unguardedly :—

"The honourable gentleman has made an appeal intended to operate without the doors of this House ; he has actually made an appeal to the physical strength of the country, under circumstances which might induce him to suppose that it would not fall entirely ineffectual from his lips ; under circumstances, moreover, that reflected the deepest discredit on the source from whence those perilous counsels had originated. Is it, I fearlessly ask, the part of a wise or a humane man to play with such instruments? How

can that honourable member reconcile to his conscience this endeavour to excite a population, which he describes as in distress, and even starving, to rebellion? for his inflammatory language amounts to nothing short of that deplorable extreme.

“It is truly bold advice which has flowed freely from the honourable gentleman; but how has he put it? Is he himself willing to encounter the dangers which he is so forward to excite? does he intend to participate in the storm he so valiantly invokes? No: far from it. His exhortation is conducted in a very different tone, and may be paraphrased in language like the following:—‘I who instigate you to rebellion, I who invite you to take up arms, am myself safe from the penalties of treason, and not even the attorney-general can lay hold on me, sheltered as I stand, behind the shield of my privileges.’ Such, it must be acknowledged, was not the language of the honourable baronet who represented Westminster. That gentleman, be his counsel what it might, had the manliness to take upon himself the entire responsibility, and abandon the screen of parliamentary privilege, by stating that he would abide by his opinions within-doors or without, and publish what he had said, avowing himself the author. This was at least frank, candid, and straightforward; but the honourable member for Montrose is content to wrap himself round with his privilege as a member of parliament, most unfeignedly disclaiming participation in such chivalry. Ministers, the committee might be assured, deeply lamented the distresses of the people, and sympathized in their sufferings—sympathized with them the more, on account of their moderation and forbearance under the pressure of calamity; but what is the counsel of the member for Montrose? Don’t be moderate—don’t be temperate—have recourse to arms! But will the honourable gentleman assert himself the champion of those whom

he thus addresses—will he put himself at their head? Oh, no; he will stand upon his privilege, but adds, that he will be glad to hear of their resistance. These, I confess, were not the exact words employed by the honourable member, but he has expressed himself to exactly the same effect in substance.”

Here Mr. Hume interrupted the speaker, disavowed the inference which the right honourable gentleman drew from his remarks, but repeated, that he was not inclined to retract a syllable of what he had said.

Mr. Peel then resumed, saying—“ I profess myself unable to understand what the honourable member has intended to convey, if my interpretation is erroneous. He has certainly stated, that when ministers, as in the late instance, were capable of procuring a corrupt majority, no other resource remained for the people, except an appeal to arms? Language, such as this, is, in my opinion, open to no inference but one. But if this address to the passions of a suffering people should be answered by their raising the standard of rebellion, what alternative, I ask, would remain for government, but that of meeting it with prompt, powerful, and successful resistance? In such an event I apprehend the honourable member could hardly reconcile to his own conscience his declaration from his place in parliament, that he would rejoice to hear of such resistance. In the present excited state of my feelings, I find myself quite unable to enter into the details of the subject before the committee, and will accordingly leave that task to my right honourable friend. But I cannot conclude without expressing my belief that the honourable gentleman will find little support in his inflammatory appeal to the people, who, I am sure, even under their present adverse circumstances, are too generally conscious of the advantages derived from the government and constitution, to listen for a moment to such

distempered and dangerous suggestions. Nevertheless, if any portion of the population, however inconsiderable, should prove so infatuated and misguided as to hearken to so pernicious a counsellor, and undertake a hopeless, a ruinous, and, I will add, a wicked resistance, I do not envy the responsibility of him who has excited it."

These collisions were repeated during the long and tedious debates on the estimates; and though ministers triumphed in the House, they were sensibly weakened in the country, and little credit was given to their vague promises of economy and retrenchment.

This, however, was unjust; the government made honourable efforts to extend relief to the country, and their financial statement included a reduction of taxes to the amount of £3,425,000; namely, £3,000,000 of beer duty, £400,000 of leather duty, and £25,000 of cider duty. Though the revenue had only derived this amount from these duties, the Chancellor of the Exchequer calculated that the relief to the public would much exceed the loss to the revenue, as the manufacturer of the article, in each case, would be freed from the manifold expensive restraints and vexations which fiscal regulations imposed. Government preferred the repeal of the beer and leather duties, because they diminished the comforts or increased the hardships of the labouring classes. They had preferred the repeal of a whole tax, in each particular instance, rather than a reduction of various taxes; because they thus saved the expenses of collection, which would amount to nearly the same sum whether the produce of the duty was great or small. And they preferred a repeal of the duty on beer to that on malt, because the former duty affected chiefly the labouring classes, who could not brew their beer at home; and the latter fell on all classes alike, whether they brewed for themselves, or resorted to the great manufacturers of the article.

But this boon to the poor would have fallen much short of the benefit which it was calculated to produce, had it been counteracted by the licensing system, which creates and perpetuates the monopoly of the great brewers. An important alteration was therefore made in the course of the session on that system, exempting licenses for the sale of beer from the authority of the magistrates. Any householder, under certain regulations, may now open a shop for this purpose by obtaining a license from the excise; and, at the same time to assist in directing the taste of the lower orders to beer instead of ardent spirits, the chancellor of the exchequer proposed an additional duty of 1s. on every gallon of corn-spirits consumed in England, and 2d. on every gallon distilled in Ireland and Scotland; thus raising the duty on the former to 8s., and on the latter to 3s.

This proposed increase, as it did not extend to rum, excited a great clamour among the corn distillers of the three kingdoms, who got the corn monopolists and landed interest to support them, and compelled a modification of the measure into a sixpence on all spirits, whether colonial or home-made. The saving of interest on the reduction of the four per cents into a stock of three and a half, which was subsequently effected, was an additional resource, and raised the revenue a little above the expenditure for the ensuing year.

The only other considerable measure of relief passed in this session was a reduction of 3s. on the hundredweight of sugar.

The renewal of the Marquis of Blandford's motion for a reform in parliament excited little attention; and the wild proposal of Mr. O'Connell to establish universal suffrage, triennial parliaments, and vote by ballot, was very generally reprobated. Even greater indignation was expressed when he first introduced the subject of the repeal of the Union, by presenting a petition from Dublin in favour of that insane

project. Sir Charles Wetherell, amid the cheers of the House, objected to the reception of the petition; but Mr. Peel, with more dignity, administered this well-deserved rebuke:—

“I confess I do not feel much surprise at the doubts expressed by the honourable member for the city of Oxford, (Mr. Lockhart), and the honourable member for Plympton, (Sir C. Wetherell), respecting the propriety of receiving a petition in support of a project so mad, and so absurd—so utterly destructive of the prosperity of Ireland, and so much calculated to injure the integrity of the empire, as that of a repeal of the act of Union. I repeat, I am not surprised at the opinions of these honourable members, but at the same time, I doubt whether it would be proper to depart from the general parliamentary rule, and refuse to receive the petition. I do not apprehend that the petition proposes a diminution of the empire, or a separation of Ireland from the control and government vested in the sovereign of this country. Ireland was a portion of the British empire, the king of England was also the king of Ireland, before any act of Union was thought of; and the petition I suppose merely prays that the two countries should be placed with respect to each other in the same situation, as they were before the act of Union was passed. I doubt, therefore, whether we can, according to the forms of parliament, reject the petition; but while I give my vote for the reception of the petition, I cannot find terms strong enough to express my reprobation of the prayer of that petition, or my sense of the renewal of attempts to disturb the minds of the ignorant portion of the people by a representation of advantages to result from the possession of a parliament in Ireland. The sentiments of the people of both countries had been freely and fairly expressed in the formation of the Union between the two countries. That Union was finally consolidated by the

repeal of all those disabilities under which the great portion of the inhabitants of that country laboured, in comparison with those of England; and I repeat, that I cannot find terms to express the strong disgust and reprobation with which I view the attempts made to separate them. When all good men were congratulating themselves on the return of that tranquillity which they sought to promote, and which had followed the healing measure of last year; when all denominations of Irishmen were allowed free access to every department of the state; when advantages had been conferred on them, such as they never before possessed; it was too much that all the old feelings of discord were to be revived, for the gratification of some individuals, by such injurious and incorrect assumptions as formed the basis of that petition. At the same time that I cannot too strongly express my abhorrence of its prayer and its object, I see no reason for refusing to receive the petition."

A new rival in the field of finance appeared in the course of the session, Mr. Poulet Thomson, afterwards Lord Sydenham, who displayed greater abilities in opposition than he subsequently manifested as a minister. He moved that a select committee should be appointed to revise the entire system of British taxation; a task of equal labour and importance, but encumbered with so many difficulties, that no modern statesman seems to possess sufficient courage for the attempt. Mr. P. Thomson's speech was worthy of the subject, and of the occasion; he enunciated and developed the great fiscal principles by which a government should be guided in the collection of a revenue; but he did not make sufficient allowance for the condition of a country obliged to provide annually for the payment of the interest on eight hundred millions of debt. The moment such a committee had commenced its inquiries, doubt and uncertainty would have been thrown into every branch of trade and commerce affected

either by the customs or the excise. Neither is it likely that any such committee could have devised a scheme by which the burdens of the country could have been apportioned in equitable shares to the different classes of the community; and if any injustice had resulted, the responsibility which the government should have borne, would have devolved vaguely on a parliamentary committee, an ephemeral body limited in its duration by the session. On the division, the motion was rejected by 167 against 78.

But the ministers had to sustain one damaging defeat in their financial measures. It took place on a question regarding two trifling superannuation allowances, amounting together only to £900 per annum; and the occurrence excited notice, not so much from its political character, as from its personal connection with members of the ministry, on whom it must be said that the transaction reflected very little credit. The nature of the affair will be best understood from the following extract from the speech of Sir Robert Heron, by whom it was brought under the consideration of the House:—

“I observe,” he said, “in the estimate which we are now called on to vote, the names of two individuals—the Honourable R. Dundas, and the Honourable W. L. Bathurst—to the former of whom was granted a pension of £500, and to the latter a pension of £400, making a total charge of £900 on the country. This charge I wish to have disallowed by the House. The former of those gentlemen was a reduced commissioner of the navy, the latter was a reduced commissioner in the victualling department. The column in which the time of service was usually marked, was in those two instances left blank—and I conclude that this gives a very proper and significant description of the services of those gentlemen; for if not *nil*, essential they certainly had not been. The situations appear to have been created purposely for the

parties; and shortly after they were appointed to them, the offices were abolished.

“We have heard much of the constant assiduity and labour which ministers showed in considering what places and pensions could be abolished without detriment to the public service; and I for one acknowledge, that I was somewhat astonished to find that the amount of saving effected by all this anxiety, was a little more than £1,000,000 a year. If we are to rely on the assiduity of ministers to curtail the expenditure, I must say that I thought the case desperate, when I saw these pensions granted in the last year. Speaking of those pensions, I know very well that the sum of £900 is a mere trifle in the expenditure of the country; but a grant, though small in amount, might be monstrous in principle. To those young gentlemen, I impute no blame; the blame must fall on ministers, and on two of them particularly—I mean, the fathers of those individuals. It was well known that they were noblemen, who for a great number of years occupied, with little intermission, some of the most important and lucrative situations in the government. Viscount Melville, at the present moment, presides as First Lord of the Admiralty; and Earl Bathurst is now Lord President of the Council, one of the Tellers of the Exchequer, and joint Clerk of the Crown. Their grandfathers were also men of high consideration; one of them for many years filled the situation of Lord High Chancellor of England, and the other was a sort of viceroy of Scotland; holding places which produced great emoluments, and performing services which were rather equivocal. Now, that these gentlemen, gorged with the public money, should require for their families, or condescend to accept, such moderate pensions, and that too at a time of public distress, does appear to me, and I do not shrink from expressing my opinion, neither do I state it more

harshly than the case requires, but it does appear to me to be—paltry. Though abstractedly considered, these pensions might seem small, yet they appeared very large when they were compared with the remuneration of a vast number of persons, whose services have been most brilliant, and whose exertions have added to the greatness of the country.”

Some resentment was expressed by Lord Melville’s friends for the harshness with which Sir Robert Heron had spoken of Lord Melville, but the rest of his argument was received with general favour in the House, and the attempt of Mr. Goulburn to excuse the appointments only increased their unpopularity. Peel saw the danger, and rose to interfere, but he gave way for a moment to Sir Robert Heron, who wished to explain that he meant nothing personal to Lord Melville; after which he thus proceeded—

“I am glad I have given way to the honourable baronet, whose explanation, I am sure, must be satisfactory to the honourable gentleman who had expressed himself on the subject with a degree of warmth that the circumstances undoubtedly justified. The honourable member for Westminster is mistaken in supposing that I disapproved of the proposition, but I can assure that honourable member that I am not insensible to the value of that independent support, which the honourable member truly said, the government had received. Most sorry should I be to lose such support, and never to the latest day of my existence, can I forget the conduct pursued by the gentlemen on the other side of the House, on the great measure of last session. The manner in which the gentlemen opposite gave their support to the government at that time, can never be forgotten by me; and I think that the conduct pursued by those gentlemen on that occasion, reflects the highest credit on the political parties of this country. With respect to the present proposition, I agree with the honourable member who spoke last,

as to the nature of it. It was only a proposition made by the government, which the House would reject or allow as it thought fit. It was a mere estimate, which, if the House thought improper, it would be its duty to reject. I beg of honourable members, however, to consider what the real nature of the proposition is, before they come to a decision upon it. It is a proposition which arose out of a revision of the establishments of the country, that the government had thought it their duty to make. The course which had been pursued in this case by his majesty's ministers, had been to take away the youngest officers, and instead of a salary of £1,000, to give them £450 until some other employment offered for them."

Sir Robert Heron's motion was carried, on division, by a majority of eighteen; and the ministers were less mortified by the parliamentary defeat, than by the effect which it produced in the country.

No member more energetically pleaded for retrenchment and financial reform, than Sir James Graham, the active representative for the county of Cumberland; and there was no one whose attacks were more dreaded by Peel and his adherents. Sir James first moved for the abolition of the salary of the Treasurer of the Navy, but rather inconsistently admitted that the place itself was one which ought not to be abolished. This of course gave a decisive advantage to the ministers in the debate, and his motion was rejected by a majority of ninety-eight.

Undaunted by this defeat, he next attempted to procure the abolition of the office of Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance, on the ground that it was unnecessary, and that the duties could be efficiently performed by the master-general. On this question, he made a much more formidable fight, but he was again defeated by a majority of seventy-six.

A third time the indefatigable member for Cumberland returned to the charge, by moving for a return of all the emoluments enjoyed by Privy Councillors, and in the course of his speech exposed many gross abuses in the distribution of ministerial patronage. Ministers could only defeat him by proposing a more extended return, as an amendment; but even thus, Sir James Graham forced a division, and was defeated by a majority of eighty.

His perseverance in the reform of the criminal law, alone enabled Peel to gather some popularity during this difficult period. Executions for forgery had become so numerous, that the country revolted against the indiscriminate severity of the law; and public opinion had manifested itself on the subject with a strength which could not be resisted. Mr. Secretary Peel brought in a bill for abolishing the punishment of death for forgery in certain cases, and thus eloquently expounded the principles of his proposed legislation:

“I have been guided in this course by the opinion of the committee which sat to inquire into the criminal code in 1819. The report of that committee says, ‘It has sometimes been said, that the abolition of penal laws, which have fallen into disuse, is of little advantage to the community. Your committee consider this opinion as an error. They forbear to enlarge on the striking remark of Lord Bacon, that all such laws weaken and disarm other parts of the criminal system. The frequent occurrence of the unexecuted threat of death in a criminal code tends to rob that punishment of all its terrors, and to enervate the general authority of the government and the laws. The multiplication of this threat in the laws of England has brought on them and the nation a character of harshness and cruelty, which evidence of a mild administration of them will not entirely remove. Repeal silences the objection. Reasoning founded on lenient exercise of authority,

whatever its form may be, is not calculated to make a general and deep impression. The removal of disuses is a preliminary operation which greatly facilitates a just estimate, and, where it is necessary, an effectual reform of those laws which are to remain in activity. Were capital punishments reduced to the comparatively small number of cases in which they are usually inflicted, it would become a much simpler operation to form a right judgment of their propriety or necessity. Another consideration of still greater moment presents itself on this part of the subject; penal laws are sometimes called into activity after long disuse, and in cases when their very existence may be unknown to the best informed part of the community; malicious prosecutors set them in motion; a mistaken administration of the law may apply them to purposes for which they were not intended, and which they are calculated more to defeat than to promote: such seems to have been the case of the person who, in the year 1814, at the assizes of Essex, was capitally convicted of the offence of cutting down trees, and who, in spite of the earnest applications for mercy from the prosecutor, the committing magistrate, and the whole neighbourhood, was executed apparently because he was believed to be habitually engaged in other offences, for none of which, however, he had been convicted or tried. No eulogy can be too great for Lord Bacon, who contended in his works for the principles I now assert; and indeed I feel surprised that any persons in authority could have perused his recommendations, and left it to the present day to carry them into effect. I confess I never hear the name of Lord Bacon without feeling the force of those lines of Cowley, which I think very preferable to those celebrated verses of Pope, in which he described him, connecting together his glory and his disgrace, as at once the greatest and the meanest of mankind. Cowley's commendation was contained in his address to the Royal Society,

and his comparison of Bacon to Moses might be extended beyond the bounds of learning and philosophy. If he had not led statesmen and society out of the wilderness, he had pointed out the path. That glory was his, the neglect was his successors—

‘Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last,
The barren wilderness he pass’d,
Did on the very border stand
Of the blest promised land,
And from the mountain-top of his exalted wit,
Saw it himself and showed us it.’

“Before making my present proposition, I referred to the bill of 1821, which had been read a third time in that House, but did not pass a law, and I find that there is no very material variation in the principle of the two measures. I also referred to the Code Napoleon, and find that there is no very material variation in the principle of my proposition and that of the Code Napoleon. There is one peculiar reason for being cautious in our advances towards the mitigation of the punishment of forgery—it is an offence chiefly committed by persons of ability and information, and whose ability and information frequently give them the means of committing it to a great extent: for instance, in the case of Fauntleroy, whose forgeries amounted to over £400,000. If the capital punishment be entirely remitted some secondary punishment must be substituted. Now, however mischievous and extensive was the crime of Fauntleroy, I am quite sure, that if such a person had been sentenced to such a punishment as two years’ hard labour on the public roads, the sympathy of the public would soon have been excited at seeing him degraded to the condition of associating with the commonest and most vulgar criminals.

“If he had been sent to New South Wales, such a man in that colony would have found that transportation was the

slightest punishment that could have been inflicted on him. Looking at these and other considerations, I must deprecate the sudden and entire cessation of the punishment of death for forgery. Let the effect of the measure which I am now proposing be watched. Desirous as we all are of gradually mitigating the severity of our criminal code, I entreat the House not to load such a disposition with the opprobrium which might be cast upon it, should premature efforts prove injurious. Let the progress be gradual and cautious, and I am confident that the object will eventually be attained."

An amendment was carried against ministers for the abolition of capital punishment in all cases of forgery, but the clause was lost in the Lords; finally, however, it passed, but was not a little mutilated in some of its most merciful clauses by the law-lords in the House of Peers.

Early in April Mr. Robert Grant introduced a bill for the emancipation of the Jews, which gave rise to very long and very uninteresting debates. The case for the Jews was very ably stated and very forcibly maintained, and it was only resisted on the ground that "Christianity forms part and parcel of the law of England;" an aphorism to which it would be hard to assign any definite signification. Christianity exists not in the law, but in the conscientious convictions of the people of England; to assign it a mere legal existence, is at once to deprive it of its Divine character, to make it a mere instrument of government, and to reject the declaration of its Divine Founder, "My kingdom is not of this world." The first reading of Mr. Grant's bill was carried by a majority only of eighteen. Mr. Secretary Peel—who had in March become Sir Robert Peel, by the death of his father—was among the opponents of the second reading of the bill. His speech was unusually feeble, and was less spirited even than the last of those which he made against conceding the Catholic claims. But the determination of the

ministry decided the fate of the measure, and it was lost by a majority of sixty-three.

On all subjects of foreign policy the Wellington administration displayed a doubt and hesitation which greatly increased the suspicion that they were secretly inclined to favour the principles of the Holy Alliance. On the question of Mexico alone, was Sir Robert Peel able to make a stand worthy of a British statesman; the subject was introduced by the lamented Huskisson, on the presentation of a petition from Liverpool, pointing out the great value of the Mexican trade to this country, and the injury to which commerce was exposed by the obstinate efforts of Spain to establish her authority over her former colonies. Sir Robert Peel thus expounded the policy of the course taken by the British ministers in the contest:

“We have shown, and France and the United States have shown, that they, that the whole world, had an interest in the tranquillity of those states. I do not know where my right honourable friend has got the information of the intended attempt again to reduce them under the dominion of Spain, but, I acknowledge, I should regret to hear of any attempt of that kind. I speak of this, not viewing it as a question of abstract right, but rather as one in which this country would offer her advice in a tone of friendship to Spain; and I believe, that never was there a time when she was more disposed to listen to that advice than at present; and knowing this, we should not discharge our duty towards her as a friendly state, if we did not strenuously recommend that she should not waste the resources she still possessed, in a fruitless attempt to reduce those states which were formerly her colonies; and that if she did not recognize their independence, she should, at least, cease to carry on a war against them. I would not enter into the question of the right we might have to demand this, for that would be enter-

ing into the question of our future policy, upon which I do not think it would be prudent for me to touch in a discussion of this kind, but undoubtedly, in common with every other maritime power, we have an interest in the restoration of tranquillity between the new states of South America and Spain, inasmuch as the continuance of hostilities would keep up those piratical attacks which were so frequent upon the commerce of all nations, in the seas adjoining those states. Spain has indeed a strong interest in preventing the loss of her possessions of Cuba and Porto Rico; but beyond these she ought not to look, for there is no doubt she will never be able to regain those she has lost, and the greatest curse that could fall upon her would be to gain temporary possession of two or three fortified places in those states. The whole of her influence in Europe would be paralyzed by her attempts to keep up even a few small places against the will of the people. For the sake of the interest of Spain herself, then, I should regret any attempt of the kind, and I earnestly hope she will attend to the advice she receives this day from England, of whose goodwill she must now be convinced. Nothing can be more injurious to Spain than such a course. There are examples in her own history, to which my right honourable friend has alluded, which it will be well for her to imitate. In the year 1609 she listened to the friendly advice of other powers, to agree to a truce with the states of the Netherlands, which, though it did not bring about a recognition of their independence immediately, yet eventually led to that, and had the effect, with some slight interruptions, of putting an end to the sanguinary contests which she had carried on against them. This, however, is not the only instance in her history in which she has recognized the principle of friendly mediation, and there is one in which it would have been well for this country if it had taken such mediation

and advice in the prudent and friendly spirit in which it was offered. In the contest in which we were engaged with our North American colonies, Spain in the year 1779, seeing the fruitlessness of the attempts we were making to retain dominion over those colonies against the wishes of their inhabitants, did as a friendly state offer her advice, that if we did not choose to recognize the independence of those states, we should, at least, as we had suffered considerably in the contest, cease from hostilities—that a truce should be agreed upon for a time, which, without any compromise of the right of either party at the moment, might lead eventually to an amicable termination of the contest. This advice we rejected, and what did we gain by it? After continuing the contest for a few years, we were obliged to do that which it would have been much better to have done sooner—we recognized the independence of the United States. Spain is now in a situation nearly similar to the situation of England then; and if she rejects the friendly advice that England and other states give her, she will find that none but baneful consequences will follow. I do hope, however, that she will be induced to listen to the friendly counsel she receives, and not waste herself in a fruitless contest, that can never restore her dominion over her colonies, and will forfeit for her the good-will of those powers, which are now anxious to promote her interests, and effect an accommodation between her and her former colonies. In these few remarks I hope the House will find a proof that the ministers of this country have not looked with an eye of indifference on the prosperity and political relations of the new states of America. Another, and a very delicate point to which my right honourable friend has called the attention of the House, are the views of the United States towards part of the Mexican territory. I hope that those states, possessing as they do the freest institutions, which have claimed

credit to themselves for being the advocates of freedom everywhere, will be too generous to take advantage of the weakness of Mexico, and trench upon her independence as a state, by the appropriation of any part of her territory. If, in the moment of her strength, they had, by their advice, prevented her from attacking Cuba, and now took advantage of her being attacked from that quarter, to prey on her weakness and her distractions, they would be acting inconsistently with their declarations, and doing that which would redound but little to their honour, or their character as a free state; but I acknowledge I entertain no suspicions of the kind. I rely with confidence on the statements of the American minister to this country, than whom a more honourable man does not exist, that America has no wish to take advantage of either Mexico or Spain, or to possess herself of any of those portions of territory to which my honourable friend has alluded. Undoubtedly it would not be consistent with the interests of England that America should make any such addition to her territories, or occupy any part of the Mexican states by settlers or otherwise; but I repeat, I have no suspicion of her disposition to do so. I trust I have stated sufficient to maintain the chief point—that we are not bound to enter into a defensive alliance with Mexico to prevent any attack from Spain through Cuba. I will not enter upon the abstract right or policy of this country with respect to any such interference, for the reason I have already assigned, but I must contend, that my right honourable friend has not made out a case to show that we are at all bound to act defensively for Mexico.”

This was a bold and manly exposition of foreign policy, but still it was felt to fall short of the high tone assumed by Canning; and Sir Robert Peel could not but feel that he was subject to no very favourable contrast with his late illustrious

rival, in dealing with the subject. But he had the still more painful conviction that the administration of which he formed a part, had been constructed on too narrow a basis, and was tottering to its fall. The obstinate prejudices of George IV. were pleaded as an excuse for the Duke of Wellington's not seeking to make such a combination of parties as would have given England a powerful ministry, entitled to the confidence of the country, and at that moment earnestly desired by the nation. Events were now fast approaching, to prove that the duke was just as adverse to a coalition as the king, and that he was resolved to admit no colleagues into the cabinet who would interfere with the dictatorial authority which he had assumed. The weakness of George IV. was the great plea for strengthening the Duke of Wellington, but that weakness began to approach the term of its career; in the very busiest part of the session, all interest was suddenly concentrated in the announcement that the king lay dangerously ill at Windsor.

CHAPTER IV.

ILLNESS AND DEATH OF GEORGE IV.—ACCESSION OF WILLIAM IV.

—REVOLUTIONS OF FRANCE AND BELGIUM.

Soon after the commencement of the year 1830, the health of George IV. was such as to excite very anxious apprehensions in the minds of his immediate attendants, which were, however, carefully concealed from the public. He had lived for some time in almost Oriental seclusion at Windsor, and reports were sometimes circulated of his indulging in some of the amusements which cheered the retirement of Tiberius at Caprææ. That these tales were all calumnies we dare not affirm, but that many of them were so, and that the rest were, at the least, grossly exaggerated, appears from the correspondence of his favourite attendant, Sir William Knighton, which shows that illness, at least, must have prevented any participation in such orgies as were described. The first bulletin, announcing unfavourable symptoms, appeared on the 15th of April; it stated that his Majesty had a bilious attack, and an embarrassment in his breathing. This announcement prevented a very angry debate on the architectural absurdities of Buckingham Palace, in which ugliness and inconvenience had been purchased at an enormous cost; and on the lavish expenditure occasioned by the repairs of Windsor Castle. The dislike with which such a waste of public money was justly viewed, was aggravated by the delay of giving the public an entrance to St. James's Park through Waterloo Place, which had been indirectly promised by the

ministers, but which the king was said to oppose with characteristic obstinacy. In fact, George IV. and his good subjects, the citizens of London, had for some years been alienated from each other; their dislike was mutual, and was not always as disguised as it ought to have been. The House of Commons evinced strong sympathies with the citizens; the grant for repairs at Windsor Castle was only carried by a majority of sixteen.

Although the bulletins issued daily announced no alarming symptoms, and on several occasions declared that the patient enjoyed intervals of comparative ease, it began early to be suspected that these documents were much too favourable in their statements, and that they were constructed to tranquillize the royal mind, and keep the king free from all apprehensions of danger. Mr. Hume proposed that a bill should be brought in for the continuation of offices on the demise of the crown; but the question was evaded by the ministers and the parliament, from motives of delicacy towards the patient. As May advanced, the king rapidly became worse, and so great was his bodily debility, that he could not endure the slightest personal exertion; he was even unable to affix the sign-manual to the documents required for the public service. Under these circumstances further concealment was impossible, and on the 24th of May, the following message was sent to both Houses of Parliament.

“GEORGE R.—His Majesty thinks it necessary to inform the House, that he is labouring under a severe indisposition, which renders it inconvenient and painful to his Majesty to sign, with his own hand, the public instruments which require the sign-manual.

“His Majesty relies on the dutiful attachment of parliament, to consider, without delay, the means by which his Majesty may be enabled to provide for the temporary dis-

charge of this important function of the crown, without detriment to the public service."

So novel an incident has too much importance to be passed over, as it has now become an historical precedent. We shall therefore give an account of its reception. In the House of Lords, the address, in answer to the royal message, was proposed by the Duke of Wellington, who said :—

"My Lords,—I consider it will be the anxious wish of your lordships to take the earliest opportunity of returning an answer to the message which I have just had the honour of communicating to your lordships by the king's command. I am confident that your lordships will feel that sorrow which is common to all his Majesty's subjects, on account of the lamentable indisposition with which it grieves me to say he has for some time past been afflicted. My lords, I propose to defer to a future opportunity the motion that his Majesty's message be taken into consideration with a view to deciding upon the mode in which the desired relief may be afforded to his Majesty. I am convinced it will be your lordships' wish not to allow a moment to pass, without expressing your lordships' sorrow for his Majesty's indisposition, and your anxious hope that his health may be re-established at an early period. I am also satisfied that your lordships will be anxious to express to his Majesty your earnest desire to relieve him from the pain and inconvenience he has informed you he labours under in signing those public instruments and documents which require the sign-manual. I do not apologize to your lordships for bringing this matter now before you; but rather take credit to myself for seizing the earliest opportunity of proposing to your lordships to concur with me in an humble address to his Majesty, in answer to the message he has intrusted to me. My lords, I will not take

this opportunity of entering into a discussion as to the measure which his Majesty's government may deem it advisable to propose for the purpose of affording his Majesty that relief which he requires. This will be done by the lord-chancellor to-morrow, and I shall accordingly now content myself with moving:—‘That a humble address be presented to his Majesty, to assure his Majesty that this House deeply laments that his Majesty is labouring under severe indisposition, and to assure his Majesty that this House earnestly and anxiously hopes that by the favour of Divine Providence his Majesty's health will be restored at an early period; that this House will proceed to consider without delay, of the means by which his Majesty may be relieved from the pain and inconvenience of signing with his own hand those public instruments which require the royal sign-manual, and may be enabled to provide for the temporary discharge of that important function of the crown without detriment to the public interests.’”

It was seconded by the recognized leader of the opposition, Earl Grey, who said:—

“Your lordships will hardly imagine that I rise with the intention of opposing in the slightest degree the address we have just heard read—in every word of which I sincerely and painfully concur, so far as it relates to the expressing of our deep regret for the lamentable indisposition of the sovereign; and in saying this, I am well assured I speak the common sentiments and feelings of this House, for the regret experienced in consequence of his Majesty's illness is deep and universal, and the hope of his recovery is cherished with the utmost earnestness by all ranks and classes of his subjects. So far I concur entirely with the address, and I also concur in the course proposed by the noble duke, of giving an immediate answer to his Majesty's message, expressing those sentiments respect-

ing his illness to which I have already alluded, and declaring our readiness to proceed as soon as possible to the consideration of the important measure which is to follow. My lords, I feel the deepest and the most poignant regret for the illness of his Majesty, and I entertain a sincere disposition to relieve his Majesty from everything which may render painful the last moments of his life, or which may, in the least, tend to throw any impediment in the way of that recovery to which all Englishmen so anxiously and earnestly look ; but we are to consider that we have a very important duty to perform towards the public. I do not now mean to question the noble duke as to the mode of proceeding which he means to adopt, to comply with his Majesty's request. This, we are informed, will be stated by the lord-chancellor to-morrow. I cannot, however, help declaring, that I shall consider it my duty to take the first opportunity that presents itself of explaining my views upon the subject. The question is one which should be entered upon with all due feeling and respect for his Majesty, but at the same time we must enter upon it with a strong impression of its deep importance to the interests of the people. It is, in fact, neither more nor less than in some degree to delegate the royal authority. In providing then, my lords, for the convenience and comfort of his Majesty, with that affection and reverence which we all undoubtedly feel, we must take care not to establish a precedent which may be dangerous to the future interests of the country. I therefore call on your lordships to consider the question as one deserving of your most anxious attention. I do not know what course will be pursued by his Majesty's ministers, nor do I wish to ask the noble duke what it is ; but I wish to observe, that in a matter of this importance—which, by the way, has come in some degree unexpectedly on me, so that I have not had time to look into the precedents in

a matter of this importance—it behoves us to proceed most carefully, and I have no hesitation in saying, that the first point to which our attention should be directed is, to search for precedents respecting the delegation of the royal authority, if any can be found—and perhaps our first step should be to appoint a committee for this purpose. I shall not trespass longer on your lordships' time; I only think it necessary to say this much. I shall now conclude by repeating what I said at the outset—and it is, that however anxious may be the desire we entertain to afford all possible comfort and convenience to his Majesty, that we must yet, in devising the mode in which it may be best done, take care not to establish a precedent respecting the delegation of the royal authority which may be of dangerous consequence hereafter. My lords, I feel it necessary to throw out these suggestions as to the grounds on which I may on a future occasion feel called upon to act."

A similar address was proposed in the House of Commons by Sir Robert Peel, and seconded by Mr. Brougham, both gentlemen confining themselves to vague generalities, and exhibiting great anxiety to avoid anything like a debate.

On the following day a bill, allowing the sign-manual to be adhibited by a stamp, was introduced into the Upper House by Lord-Chancellor Lyndhurst in a speech of great learning and research. After it had been read a first time, a committee to examine precedents was appointed on the motion of Earl Grey, and the second reading was fixed for the 27th instant. On that day it was objected that the bill had not been accompanied by some evidence from the medical attendants of his Majesty, stating the nature and character of the disease under which he laboured, adding a strong insinuation that the king's mind was affected. This was denied with great warmth, almost amounting to violence, by the Duke of Wellington; and Lord Winchilsea

retracted the insinuation. The standing orders were then suspended; the bill, with a few verbal amendments, was hurried rapidly through its formal stages, and was on the same evening sent down to the House of Commons by two of the judges.

As this result had been anticipated, the House of Commons was pretty full, and the gallery crowded by persons anxious to hear from authority some intimation of the real condition of the sovereign. Some routine business having been despatched, the message from the lords was delivered with more solemnity than is usual on such occasions, and then, amid anxious silence, Sir Robert Peel rose to explain the nature and necessity of the measure, which he did in the following terms:—

“ Sir, in moving the first reading of a bill intended to make a temporary provision for enabling his Majesty to affix his royal signature to those public instruments which require that formality, I must repeat, in concurrence, I am sure, with the unanimous feeling of the House, and of this nation, my deep regret at the circumstances which have rendered this application to parliament necessary. It is, as his Majesty has informed the House by his gracious message, on account of the indisposition under which he is labouring, painful and inconvenient to the king to attach his sign-manual to a multitude of official instruments connected with the administration of justice, and pardons, when it was thought fit to extend mercy to those who had received a penal sentence; on all such occasions, whatever pain or inconvenience affixing the signature might have subjected the king to, his Majesty never suffered those considerations to stand in the way of his desire to facilitate the administration of justice, or to exercise his royal prerogative of mercy, and to forward the due execution of the public service. I am sure that this House is animated by a unani-

mous desire to spare his Majesty the pain and inconvenience, if measures can be devised to effect that object consistently with the due discharge of the public service. I hope, consistently with that object, and with the prevention of all detriment or fear of injury to the public service, that the measure which is now introduced is likely to be satisfactory. The present bill provides that his Majesty may, by his royal warrant or commission, to be signed with the sign-manual, appoint one or more persons to attach a stamp to those instruments which require the royal signature. That stamp will be provided under the direction of the Lord President of the Council. There will be two stamps; one of which will bear the words 'George R.,' and the other 'G. R.,' the initials only, for such instruments as are usually signed in that way. The bill provides that the persons so empowered to affix this stamp, shall not be authorized to affix it to any instrument without a memorandum, specifying the nature of the instrument, and bearing the signature of, at least, three out of seven officers of state, who are named, to be responsible for its application. Of those seven signatures, three, at least, must be attached to every instrument, as a certificate of its authenticity. The seven persons so appointed are—the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President of the Council, the Lord Privy Seal, the First Lord of the Treasury, and the three principal Secretaries of State. There is a provision in the bill, that no one of these seven officers so appointed shall act alone; and, in order to guard against the possibility or the supposition of any possible fraud, an oath is provided by the bill to be taken by the parties by whom the stamp is to be affixed. The stamp can only be affixed by the king's express command, and in the presence of his Majesty; and the party affixing it must attest by his own signature, that the stamp has been affixed by his Majesty's express command, and in

the presence of his Majesty. These are the conditions which accompany the passing of the bill. However temporary it may be in its duration, for it is proposed to limit the bill to the end of this session—and God grant that it may not be necessary to extend it longer—but in case it should become necessary to continue it for a longer time, then there will be a necessity of bringing the measure again under the consideration of the House; so that every caution possible has been used in this case. It is right that it should be so, because we must bear in mind that we are establishing a precedent which may be appealed to on future occasions. There is one other provision which I omitted to notice—namely, an express enactment that his Majesty may, at any time, attach his sign-manual in the ordinary way to any instrument which he sees fit and convenient, and that such signature shall have the ordinary operation, notwithstanding the concurrent power given to attach the signature in the other manner. His Majesty will, therefore, if he sees fit, exercise his royal prerogative with his own hand. There have been various instances in the former history of this country, of the royal signature being attached in the manner proposed by this bill. In the reign of Henry VIII. more than one commission was issued empowering persons to apply a stamp, instead of the royal signature or initials, and giving it equal validity with the royal sign-manual. In the reign of Queen Mary also, the same power was given by royal commission; and it is recorded, on the authority of Bishop Burnett, that in the reign of King William, a stamp was applied in a similar manner. But although there exist all these various precedents for devolving to individuals the power of affixing a stamp, by the authority of the sign-manual, we have thought it the safer course to apply to parliament in this way for its sanction. I could enter into a more detailed

explanation if it were necessary, but from the circumstances under which this measure is proposed, from its temporary duration, and the caution with which it is surrounded, I should hope that the House will be unanimous in the desire to afford his Majesty this accommodation. It will be felt that it is extremely desirable that the measure should be passed with as little delay as possible, particularly on account of those public instruments which would now be pressing for signature, if it were not for the pain and inconvenience which the operation causes to his Majesty. At the same time, I propose, that we should see the provisions of the bill in print before it is finally carried. I shall move that it shall be read a first and second time to-day; it can then be carried through its remaining stages to-morrow, and receive the royal assent on Saturday."

Lord Althorp then said: "It is the wish of every honourable member present to do whatever is in his power to alleviate the sufferings of his Majesty under the unfortunate circumstances in which he is placed. The only difficulty in the case is, the necessity of using great caution in establishing a precedent which might be so important in its consequences. To the statement of the right honourable baronet, so far as my opinion goes, I see no objection. I only wish to suggest, whether it would not be proper, before the bill is finally passed, to have some evidence that his Majesty is in such a state, as to render a measure of this nature necessary. It is to the possible abuse of the precedent hereafter, that my hesitation applies. We ought to be particularly cautious to prevent any application of it without a sufficient necessity. I do not mean to object to the reading of the bill at present, but before it is finally passed, I hope the House will have some proof of its necessity."

The necessity for speed was so obvious, that Lord Althorp

withdrew his objections; the bill was then read a first and second time; it was hurried through the remaining stages on the following night. It was no longer possible to disguise from the nation that the king's disease was mortal; and the bulletins occasionally mentioned aggravations of the symptoms which seemed to indicate a breaking up of the constitution. It became known that the disease was ossification of the heart, which could have no other than a mortal termination, but that termination was hastened by the bursting of a blood-vessel during a violent fit of coughing, and early on the morning of Saturday the 26th of June, 1830, George IV. breathed his last.

The character of George IV. has, like that of every other prince, been drawn with very different colours by different hands: with some it has been made the subject of extravagant eulogy, and with others of undeserved censure. Those who are disposed to extend their indulgent connivance to the errors and vices of monarchs, and who reserve their prying criticism for vulgar station, hold him up nearly as a model of perfection; while he has been as unjustly mangled by another class of critics, who feel a particular predilection to apply their scalping-knife to crowned heads, and who, like the ancient priests, delight to select their victims from rare or consecrated races. But George IV. was neither much better nor much worse than the average run of princes brought up in the perpetual view of a throne, released from the restraints of prudence at the age when passion is strongest, and placed in all stages of his life beyond the sphere of the common motives of ambition or fear of degradation which actuate other men.

As a king, in the exercise of his authority, he understood his age and nation. With the professional proneness of his *caste* to exalt prerogative, he never ostensibly allowed it to interfere with the ascertained rights or settled opinions of

his subjects. Though he was never known to suggest reform or repairs in the social edifice, and busied himself rather with questionable innovations in more vulgar architecture, he was too enlightened to oppose those changes in the national policy which the progress of knowledge had rendered necessary, and which were suggested or supported by his responsible advisers. Accordingly, the latter ten years of his reign will always be memorable in the annals of England for ameliorations of our commercial code, for improvements in our criminal laws, and for the abolition of sectarian distinctions as disqualifications for civil privileges.

In the domestic relations of life, or in the selection of his private associates, his warmest friends can say nothing in his praise. The great vice of his character seemed to be an intense selfishness, which could neither share nor excite strong sympathy—which could make no sacrifice and incur no trouble for others—which taught him to consult only his own humours, his own caprices, and his own ease, as the supreme law for those about him, as well as for himself—and which never calculated at what cost to others he purchased his own gratifications, whether of power, pride, taste, luxury, wit, or sensual indulgence, provided *he* secured them.

Most of those who shared his familiarities or were admitted to his table at the early part of his life, had been discarded before its close; and not one man of brilliant parts or independent character was ever voluntarily invited to a continued intercourse, or could endure the terms at which it must be purchased.

On the other hand, it need not be said that his resentments and antipathies were less fleeting than his friendships. His insulting treatment of his wife immediately on their marriage, and his continued course of persecution after their separation, must be censured by those who

might not be disposed to break a lance in defence of the purity or prudence of his wife's conduct. Without alluding to any farther instances of this unforgiving disposition, it may be sufficient to say, that, for causes unknown to his royal highness, his aversion to his brother the Duke of Sussex was not overcome even at the prospect of death.

That he was a man of cultivated understanding and varied accomplishments, his bitterest enemies cannot deny. His skill in music and his taste in pictures were universally acknowledged. His acquaintance with literature, science, and politics was, probably, greater than that of any contemporary sovereign; and none of his brother monarchs understood more profoundly the laws and mysteries of court fashion, or could exhibit in more finished perfection the polish and elegance of court manners.

From the first announcement of his illness, his decease had become an object of such daily expectation, and during the latter years of his reign he had lived so much retired from his people, that little thought was bestowed on his malady or his sufferings, and little regret was felt or expressed at the event. The day of his funeral was made a holiday by the citizens of London, and the homage of mourning in outward show was not accorded to his memory beyond the circles influenced by court fashion.

Very different was the strength of feeling with which the accession of his successor, William IV., was hailed. The lowest of the people seemed sensible to the contrast between the manners of the two monarchs. The new sovereign exhibited himself to his people, conversed with them, and shared in their tastes and amusements. He was understood to have contracted no habits of extravagance; and he showed no haughty disdain of popular approbation. Though he retained the ministers, and professed to act on the political system of his predecessor, he

immediately acquired a great share of popularity, which was peculiarly due to his own frank nature and affable deportment. His instant promotion of some of his old friends, such as Sir Sidney Smith, his well-timed liberalities, and his total disregard of party distinctions in receiving the homage of his subjects, afforded the best omen of a happy reign.

The first message of the new king to his parliament simply recommended such an arrangement of public business as would admit of an early dissolution, and a new election. The Whig opposition insisted that the civil list should be previously arranged, and provision made for the not impossible contingency of a regency, the heir-presumptive (the princess Victoria) being a minor. In the Upper House, Earl Grey brought forward the question of regency as an amendment to the address in answer to the royal message, and in the course of his speech expressed a decided opinion that the existing administration was incapable of conducting with advantage the public affairs of the country. This declaration of war seemed to take the ministers by surprise, and their annoyance was increased by the anti-Catholic party taking the same course as Earl Grey—a fusion of parties which they stigmatized as “an unnatural coalition.”—The debate was more than usually animated, but the ministers had a majority of one hundred against fifty-six. A similar amendment was proposed by Lord Althorp in the House of Commons, with his usual calmness and moderation; it was seconded by Mr. Brougham in a speech of passionate invective, indicating that he had not only drawn the sword, but had also flung away the scabbard. Mr. Huskisson took the same side, and was sharply rebuked by Sir Robert Peel, who said that the right honourable gentleman seemed to have forgotten that he had ever been a minister of the crown. To this reproach Huskisson sarcas-

tically replied, "I am unconscious of having acted with the forgetfulness imputed to me; but I bow with great submission to all lessons received from my right honourable friend on the subject of inconsistency." On a division, there appeared for the amendment the formidable minority of one hundred and thirty-nine, and the ministers prevailed only by a majority of forty-six.

On the following night Mr. Brougham returned to the charge with still more terrible invective; he compared the Duke of Wellington to Prince Polignac, and menaced him with the same determined opposition which that minister was encountering in France:—

"I can perceive, sir," he said, "in this country, as in that, that the day of force is over, and that the minister who hopes to rule by an appeal to royal favour or to military power, may be overwhelmed, though I in nowise accuse him of such an attempt. Him I accuse not. It is you I accuse—his flatterers—his mean, fawning parasites."

Sir Robert Peel here interrupted, and said with great warmth: "I ask the honourable and learned gentleman, as I am one of those on this side of the House to which he is referring, whether he means to accuse me of such conduct? The honourable and learned gentleman addressed himself to this side of the House, when he said, 'I mean to accuse you—his flatterers—his mean, fawning parasites.' I am sitting on this side of the House, and speaking in my own individual capacity, I ask him whether he presumes—whether he presumes to call me the mean and fawning parasite of anybody?"

Mr. Brougham resumed, amid some cries of chair, chair! "How is it possible, sir, for you to answer the question that has been asked; I do not know, I am not aware, how you, by any possibility, can answer a question that has been put to me; but I observe, that it is reckoned much easier on

that side of the House to have the question put, and then, by a cry of this sort, prevent the answer being given. Now, sir, I beg to answer the right honourable gentleman's question by a question of my own. I ask him, whether in the course of the last two or three sessions, I have ever treated him so disrespectfully, as he, for the purpose of putting this question, chooses to consider the case? I ask him, whether he has perceived in my conduct, in word or deed, during the last two or three sessions, the slightest tendency towards treating him with personal incivility or disrespect? Sir, I anticipate the right honourable gentleman's answer, and it is in reply to the question which he has demanded of me. Sir, it was impossible that I should allude to him, but what I did allude to was the votes passed, and the resolutions come to, and the cries uttered, all of which I have as much right to canvass as honourable members had to make them. An equal right too I claim, to comment on the character and conduct—or at least, if not on the character, on the political and official conduct of any one of the ministers to whom the crown is pleased to give its confidence. This, sir, is my undeniable right; and if in the course of my comments I am interrupted by cheers, the meaning of which is as much as to say that those comments are contemptible and unfounded, it is also my undeniable right to impute that interruption to what I please. Let me be understood; I do not ascribe motives, but I ascribe tendencies. It was tendencies that I ascribed. I am in the judgment of the House that I said it was the parasite—*pessimum genus inimicorum*—that did the mischief. I have a perfect right, sir, to challenge the conduct of any minister that the crown may please to appoint; and if any minister is defended in an unconstitutional manner, it is my privilege, it is my right, nay, more, it is my bounden duty, to attack and expose them, and that shall ever, while I have a seat

in this House, be the course which I shall adopt. It is, at the same time, the course of conduct which it behoves this House to pursue; and I warn his majesty's ministers, that such a course will always be adopted, and that it will be their interest, and their best and safest policy, to expect and lay their account at seeing it adopted."

Sir Robert Peel then said: "Sir, I have no right to speak at this moment; but I trust that the House will permit me to say a few words, (I trust in perfect good temper,) in allusion to that part of the honourable and learned member's speech, in which he referred to my interruption of his observations. I do not expect that he offered to myself these personal comments of an unjustifiable nature. I do not believe that it was his deliberate intention to offend any one by their use; but at the same time, I must say, that it would have been better for him to have withdrawn the expression altogether, to have said that it was uttered in the warmth of debate, rather than attempt, in this unsatisfactory manner, to justify it. No one has contested his perfect right to attack ministers for their public conduct, but he said, 'If the Duke of Wellington should resort to intrigue or employ force,' and at that word, sir, a cheer was given, on which the honourable and learned member turned round and said, 'Do I accuse him of this? No, sir, no such thing—I accuse you, his fawning parasites'—and then there was a cheer of indignant remonstrance at an attack thus made, and then declared to be meant, not as against the minister, but against his fawning parasites. Sir, it will be bad indeed, if we are not able to conduct these debates, which naturally lead to sufficient asperity of expression and warmth of feeling, without these personal imputations. These words, sir, (for I will make the apology and retraction for the honourable and learned gentleman) were not meant to apply to any one—they were not meant

to apply to me ; the honourable and learned member said to himself, and I am sure that his feeling of honour and candour will acquiesce in the statement I now make, that they were uttered in the warmth of debate, and without reference to any individual application."

Mr. Brougham: "I have no hesitation in saying that the right honourable baronet is quite correct. I did not charge any member more than himself with being a parasite. I was myself offended that I was suspected of applying the words to him. They were not deliberately directed to any individual, all that I did was to state my feelings in language perhaps a little warmer than usual. I will only add, that what I said of parasites is, in fact, true ; and that the worst sort of enemies a man can have, are those who obsequiously call themselves his friends."

The subject was again introduced by Mr. Robert Grant, but the ministers on this occasion had a decided triumph ; they had on their side two hundred and forty-seven, while their opponents only mustered ninety-three ; the victory, however, was more apparent than real, the question would have been differently decided had the country taken any lively interest in the matter.

On the 23rd of July parliament was prorogued by the king in person, and immediately afterwards dissolved. The French Chambers had been dissolved in the preceding May, and when the returns were completed on the 25th of June, it appeared that the liberal opposition could reckon on a majority of two hundred and seventy to one hundred and forty-five, without counting their share of fifteen who remained doubtful. Such a result perfectly astounded Prince Polignac and his colleagues ; they had hoped that the conquest of Algiers, recently achieved under their auspices, would have so gratified the military vanity of the French, that the tide of popularity would have turned in

their favour; but the fate of the cabinet had been decided by the election, and the constitution supplied no means by which that decision could be rescinded. It was finally resolved that the constitution itself should be violated; ordinances were prepared for changing the law of elections, and depriving the people of their electoral rights; for establishing a stringent censorship of the press; and for dissolving the Chambers which had not yet assembled. Though Charles X. and his advisers had thus resolved to peril the cause of royalty, they made no preparations for suppressing the resistance which their measures were certain to provoke. The garrison of Paris was not increased, and no additional troops had been drawn round the capital. It appears, from an admirable history of the military events of the revolution of July, published by an officer of the guards, that the whole troops in garrison at Paris on the 25th of July amounted only to eleven thousand five hundred and fifty men, including infantry, cavalry, artillery, fusileers, and gendarmerie: whereas, if measures had been taken a week or a fortnight before, according to the same authority, between thirty and forty thousand might have been assembled, with fifty pieces of cannon. Thus, while an appeal to military force must have appeared to sensible men inevitable, no additional military force was provided, and no accommodations were made for that on the spot. Even the commandant of the military division in which Paris is situated was absent; and the formal appointment of Marshal Marmont as his successor had not been completed till he was called upon to act. Precautionary measures of a civil character seemed to be as much overlooked, in the confident system of the government, as those of a military.

The ordinances were published in the *Moniteur* of the 26th of June, but it was late in the evening before the fact became generally known. Such of the deputies as had

reached Paris assembled to consult on the course that ought to be adopted; pressing letters were sent to those who were absent, especially Lafayette and Lafitte; and the hotels of the ministers were attacked by irritated crowds. So little alarm was excited by these demonstrations, that on Tuesday morning, Charles X., accompanied by the dauphin, went on a hunting excursion to Rambouillet.

But Tuesday morning had dawned more ominously in Paris than the infatuated king had anticipated. The printers and compositors of such of the journals as submitted to the ordinance, being deprived of occupation, were turned into the streets as rioters and insurgents; they were joined by thousands of operatives from the northern and eastern suburbs of Paris, seats of large manufacturing establishments, the proprietors of which closed their works, partly in alarm at the crisis, and partly to swell the popular demonstration against the acts of the government. Thus was an insurrectionary army, ready made, thrown out into the streets of Paris, and prepared to make up by courage and resolution what it wanted in union and discipline.

The manifesto of resistance came from the periodical press; forty-four editors of papers issued a protest against the ordinances, which, had the contest ended differently, would assuredly have been visited with the penalties of treason. Their uncompromising and energetic declaration concludes in the following words, well adapted to form the motto on the rallying standard of revolt: "*The government has lost to-day that legal character which commands obedience. We shall resist it, therefore, in all that relates to us; and it rests with France to judge to what extent her own resistance is to proceed.*"

Two journals, *Le National* and *Le Temps*, in defiance of the ordinances, persisted in publishing their papers. A com-

missary of police, with an armed force, proceeded to the offices, which were strongly barricaded, and while efforts were made to force an entrance, the printers proceeded with their work, and as fast as copies of the obnoxious journal could be struck off, they were flung to the multitude from the windows. All the blacksmiths of the neighbourhood refused to aid the police in picking the locks, and it was necessary to send for the wretch who rivets the chains of the galley-slaves before an entrance could be effected. The police then scattered the types, broke the presses, and rendered the rest of the machinery unserviceable.

This strange scene continued for some hours; when it was terminated, tumultuous crowds began to assemble on the Boulevards, around the Palais Royal, and in the gardens of the Tuilleries. It was obvious that order could no longer be obtained by the ordinary police force, and at five in the evening, Marmont, who had only that morning been appointed to the command of the garrison of Paris, ordered out eight battalions of the line, six battalions of guards, and four pieces of artillery, to aid the gendarmerie in clearing the streets. A detachment of infantry, preceded by lancers, and mounted policemen, advanced from the Carrousel to the Rue St. Honoré; they were hailed with shouts for the charter, and other menacing cries. The cavalry replied to these shouts with brutal outrage, trampling on the people who could not get out of their way, and striking them with their sabres. The citizens avenged this brutality by showers of tiles, stones, and even pieces of furniture, from the tops of the houses and from the windows, and the progress of the cavalry was impeded by a barricade, formed by an omnibus thrown across the street. A shot fired from the English hotel, in the Rue St. Honoré, was answered by a volley from a detachment of the guards; and blood being once shed, the battle became fierce through the whole centre of

Paris. The Swiss guards exhibited a most sanguinary disposition, firing frequently on unarmed groups; while the troops of the line evinced the greatest reluctance to act against the insurgents. At the close of Tuesday the military having cleared the streets, marched back to their barracks; Marmont wrote to the king in terms of congratulation and confidence; Polignac and his colleagues assembled to concert their last ordinance, by which Paris was declared in a state of siege.

Tuesday night was not passed in idleness by the revolters; all the lamps in Paris were broken; the citizens, protected by the darkness, took possession of the gunners' shops, the guard-houses of the gendarmes, the stores of arms at the theatres, and the great arsenal and powder magazine. When morning dawned, parties of the national guard in uniform appeared among the people, and the tricoloured flag was displayed by the insurgents. On the contrary, signs of weakness and indecision appeared among the royalists; it was late in the morning before Marmont summoned the troops from their quarters, and formed them into order of battle. A more absurd disposition of forces than that made by the marshal can hardly be imagined; his troops divided into four columns were to occupy the whole line of the interior boulevards, to retain possession of the squares and open places in the court-end of Paris, and to keep open the communication between these remote posts through the great thoroughfares: his own headquarters were fixed at the Tuilleries; thus, his line of operations was too extensive; the communications between the detached posts lay through narrow and crooked streets; and the centre, including the Louvre and the Tuilleries, was almost denuded of a garrison.

The first column employed in the wide streets that diverge from the beautiful church of La Madeleine, met no oppo-

sition, and effected no good object. The second which ascended the Rue Richelieu, and then passed to the right along the Boulevards, encountered no opposition in its early progress; it reached the Porte St. Denis, but from thence to the Bastile it had to encounter the most fierce and deadly resistance. From the houses, from the corners of the streets, and from barricades, which arose, as if by magic, a constant fire was maintained on the column. No sooner had it forced a passage, when the barricades were again repaired, so as to render its return impossible, while every minute of delay raised fresh obstacles in its front. In the *Place de la Bastille*, after a furious battle, the officer in command, unable to advance by the Rue St. Antoine, or to return by the Boulevards, was compelled to make a large circuit to the east, cross the bridge by the *Jardin des Plantes*, and return at the other side of the river. This failure was equivalent to a defeat, and the circuit which the column took in its retreat enabled the assailants to assist their brethren in other parts of the city.

The third division fared still worse: when it reached the *Marché des Innocens*, it could neither advance nor retreat; hemmed in by rising barricades, exposed to a brisk fire from the windows of houses, from passages, alleys, and corners of streets, the soldiers maintained an unequal contest until their ammunition was exhausted, when they were extricated by fresh assistance from the Tuilleries.

But the most destructive scene of warfare was at the square of the Hotel de Ville, where the citizens acted under leaders, and advanced on their enemies in masses, charging up to the very mouths of the cannon. After a most sanguinary contest, which lasted ten hours, the soldiers were driven to take shelter in the Hotel de Ville, from whence ^{they} ~~it~~ made good ~~its~~ ^{their} retreat to the Tuilleries about midnight, escaping with difficulty over the barricades which had been erected since the morning.

Marmont had thus been beaten on all points; his soldiers returned to their quarters exhausted by a day of unparalleled exertion under a burning sun, and, as if to complete their misfortune, it appeared that no provision whatever had been made to provide them with necessary provision and refreshment. On the contrary, every door was open to shelter their antagonists, and every table was spread to supply their wants; the ladies of Paris vied with each other in administering to the necessities of the champions of freedom.

During Wednesday night the citizens completed the barricades, while Marmont wasted precious time in uselessly remonstrating with the king, and endeavouring to effect some accommodation with the popular leaders. The battle of Thursday commenced with an attack on the Tuilleries and the Louvre; the latter of which was desperately assailed by the citizens, and as desperately defended by the Swiss guards. About noon two battalions of the line took off their bayonets, and joined the people in a body. Marmont had to draw a Swiss battalion from the Louvre, to supply their place; but in executing this movement it was impossible to avoid some little confusion: the people made a sudden rush forwards; the Swiss, seized with panic, gave way, and the Louvre was won. Instantly the windows of the picture gallery were lined with musketeers, who opened a deadly fire on the lancers and infantry in the Carrousel and the court of the Tuilleries. The troops began to waver, and the people from the other side of the place, by a sudden rush, changed their unsteadiness into a precipitate flight; Marmont and his staff had scarcely time to escape into the gardens, and they were pursued by the victors through the whole length of the Elysian fields. So sudden had been this overthrow, that Marmont had not time to call on his detached parties; the battle was thus uselessly protracted

by some detachments of the Swiss, who were finally overwhelmed, and in some instances very cruelly treated. Before three o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday, Paris was evacuated by the royal troops, and the triumph of the people was complete.

A provisional government was formed that evening, and on the morning of Friday the 30th, order was restored, and the service of the national guard completely organized. On the same day the deputies met in their own Chamber, and elected the Duke of Orleans to the provisional office of lieutenant-general of the kingdom. On the 7th of August he was called to the throne, by the title of Louis Philippe I., king of the French. Charles X. and his family were contemptuously dismissed to exile; such of his ministers as failed to escape were brought to trial, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment.

The Belgic revolution which followed must be described more summarily. Belgium and Holland, united under one head by the treaty of Vienna, had never coalesced; military force alone prevented their separation. So discontented were the Belgians with their Dutch rulers, that partial insurrections had taken place in the spring; but it was not until the 26th of August that the riotous proceedings of a mob at Brussels became the harbinger of a revolution which long threatened fatal consequences to the peace of Europe. A tedious conflict ensued, in which both parties exhibited a pretty equal amount of folly, cowardice, and incapacity; and it was protracted to the 26th of October, when the Prince of Orange departed from Antwerp, the citadel of which was the last possession of his family in Belgium.

We need not notice the revolutions of Saxony and Brunswick; a popular excitement was manifest throughout Europe, and England did not escape the contagion. Coming at the eve of a general election, the events which we have described

in France and Belgium exercised a powerful influence on the stability of the ministers. It was imputed to them that they had been privy to the despotic measures of the French government: that Polignac had been made minister by the influence of the Duke of Wellington; and that his Grace, while he favoured the prince's policy, only disliked the rashness with which it had been attempted to put it into execution. The imputation was absurd, so far as it ascribed to any Englishman cognizance or approbation of the designs of Polignac; and the readiness with which the new government of France was recognized, showed that the cabinet had no design of engaging in a new crusade to restore the elder branch of the Bourbons; but it is not the less true that the Duke of Wellington viewed the progress of popular triumphs with great jealousy, and that he would not have been indisposed to join foreign powers in checking the progress of revolutionary commotion. He might have tolerated liberty in France, but he was no friend to the independence of Belgium, and would have exerted all the influence at his command to restore the dominion of the king of Holland over that country; and he would equally have opposed himself to all exertions of insurgent liberty in Spain or Italy. Hence, it was not unreasonably believed that his continuance in office would throw England back into the arms of the Holy Alliance, and deprive her of her proud place as the model of constitutional freedom and the protector of national right.

The foreign policy of the duke was thus unpopular, and not less so was Peel's avowed opposition to parliamentary reform. An immense impulse had been given to this question by the events of Paris, and the Whigs had gained a great accession of popularity by their ready adoption of the cause. As might, under such circumstances, have been expected, the results of the elections were decidedly unfavour-

able to the government. Out of two hundred and thirty-six members then returned by elections more or less popular in England, only seventy-nine were ministerial votes; one hundred and forty-one were in avowed opposition. Liverpool returned Mr. Huskisson and General Gascoyne, both, though on different grounds, hostile to the ministry. Mr. Hume was returned for Middlesex, and the important county of York chose Mr. Brougham as one of its representatives.

Nor was this the only gloom over their prospects. Early in June Mr. O'Connell had sent to the Irish papers a furious declaration of war against the ministers, which we must insert, as it is necessary to the explanation of subsequent events:—

“ To the Editor of the Waterford, and Weekly Waterford, Chronicles.

“ London, June 7th, 1830.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—You are quite right—the time is come, when Ireland should, one and all, rouse itself, to fling off the administration of the Duke of Wellington. He is, in my judgment, totally unfit for the office of prime minister. A portion of Ireland organized by the Catholic Association, of whom 1,400 were Protestants, forced him to grant emancipation; but he granted it with the worst grace possible. He added to it the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders, the suppression, or rather attempt at suppression, of the monastic orders, and the insult to our bishops—add to these, that despotic law which has authorized the lord-lieutenant to issue his late proclamation. In the annals of legislation there never was so unconstitutional a law. How he was compelled to emancipate is well known, but he threw as much of bitterness into the cup as he possibly could. I really think that he hates or despises Ireland. His powers, too, of reasoning, appear to me of the lowest class.

He is quite the commander-in-chief of the ministry, and rules the men who have the littleness to act with him with a sway almost despotic. I think his foreign policy of the worst possible description, and that the tendency of his public measures is all towards arbitrary sway. It is, in short, essential to the peace and prosperity of these countries, that we should have another minister.

“As to Ireland, the insulting and insane attempt to increase the taxation, at such a period of deep distress as the present, is a proof of utter total ignorance of our real situation, or total disregard of our wants. The hour is therefore come, when every effort should be made to press on the administration of the duke. This is the very time to attack his government in every legal and constitutional way. I very much approve of your plan of securing a gold currency for Ireland. If gold be good for England as a medium of exchange, it ought to be equally good for the Irish. Indeed, it is a very formidable advantage that the English have over us in this, that their currency is of actual value as an article of commerce, being gold—and that we Irish should have no other currency than mere paper, in itself as an article of commerce of no value whatsoever.

“It is too bad that the welfare of Ireland should be thus postponed, as it were, to serve England. It seems therefore a duty to rouse the people to effectuate the necessary change, by calling for gold for every pound-note. A man who has a pound-note may surely as well have a sovereign. A thousand accidents may make the pound-note not worth 1½d. There is nothing which can possibly render the sovereign not worth 20s.; and let me tell you, that it may again become worth 30s. of the then currency. Call therefore on the people—the honest unsophisticated people—to send in the bank-notes of every description, and get gold. Take this as a measure of precaution everywhere—let it spread far

and near, and then, at least, we will be so far on a par with England.—Believe me, most sincerely yours, DANIEL O'CONNELL."

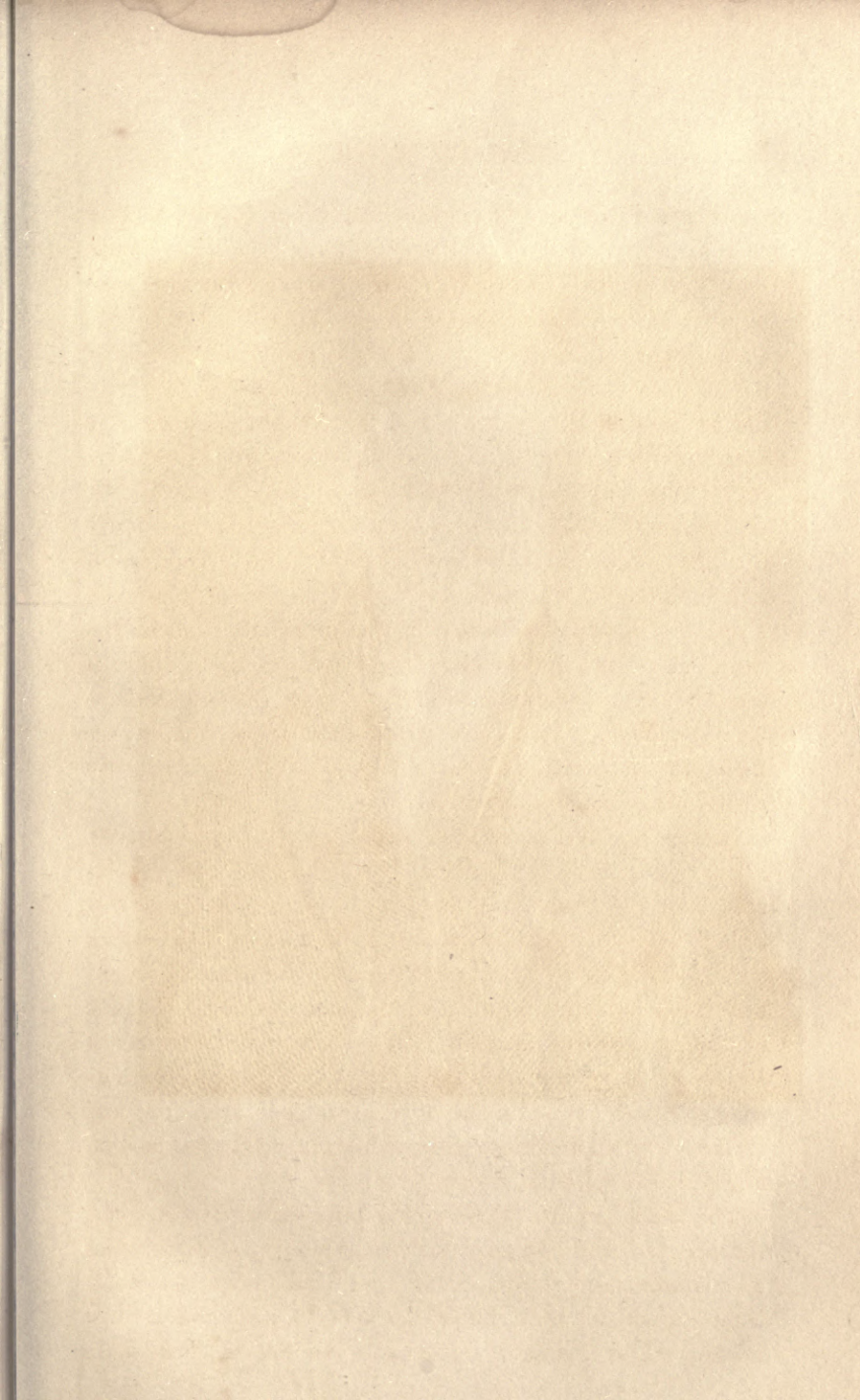
When called upon to explain this mischievous production in the House of Commons, he repeated his denunciation of ministers in the following terms:—

"I heard," said Mr. O'Connell, "great cheering from the treasury benches, when it was thought that my honourable friend had made a hit at me. Well, did these retainers of the ministers—these unbought, unbiassed, but still honourable gentlemen, support me in any effort of mine to relieve the distresses of Ireland by removing existing and flagrant abuses? No, sir, I was met by a united phalanx; and this, sir, is the reason why I shall continue to act as I like out of this House. By agitation Ireland became strong; by agitation she put down her bitter enemies; by agitation has conscience been set free; by agitation Irish freedom has been purchased; and by agitation it shall be secured. Liberty was never yet obtained by quiescence. The iron sceptre of despotism and bigotry was never yet broken by apathy. Sir, I ask if agitation—constitutional agitation—prevailed in England, should we not before this have had a reform in parliament? If there were not in England an apathy which I hold in contempt, I ask, would a few lords return the members of this House? or, would an oligarchy presume to trample upon the rights of the people? or, would the minister be secure of a venal majority, to carry every profligate job he might think proper to advocate? It is the absence of agitation that perpetuates abuse in England; the existence of it in Ireland will ultimately establish the people's rights. The speech of Mr. Sheil has been alluded to, as against me. Now, I disclaim any connection with the sentiment to which my honourable friend has referred. I despise the patronage of any government—I contemn

the name of office. This was always my feeling, and in that feeling I shall die. But I will say, the government have not treated the Catholics of Ireland well since the passing of the Relief bill. Their conduct towards the Catholic bar is disgraceful. I don't want the gewgaw of a silk-gown, and neither do I refer to my friend Mr. Sheil, for we were fellow-agitators, and must be prepared to bear up against the hatred of those whom we succeeded in defeating. But why has not a silk-gown been given to Mr. O'Loughlen, or Mr. Ferrall, or Mr. Ornise, or Mr. Ball? Sir, the reason is—they are Catholics. Now, this is an injury to their clients, many of whom are Protestants. I tell my honourable friend that he is mistaken about the workings of the Relief bill. It has done well, in spite of his Majesty's government. The people themselves have been reconciled; and now Protestants and Catholics see their own interests, and are resolved to be no longer the dupes of designing mercenaries."

So soon as parliament was prorogued, he commenced an active agitation for a Repeal of the Union: all the respectable Catholics, including the bishops and the aristocracy, either held aloof or discouraged this movement; O'Connell was therefore forced to enlist young adventurers as agitators; and these immature orators, the "Young Ireland" of 1830, attacked the government and its officers with an excess of insult which amounted to absolute raving. Agrarian outrage followed in the train of unscrupulous agitation, and Ireland was plunged into misery, to gratify personal passion and personal ambition.

The state of England, and more particularly of the southern counties, was equally unsatisfactory. Great bodies of labourers, especially in Kent, assembled to break agricultural machinery, and compel farmers to raise the rate of wages; while midnight incendiaries set fire to corn-stacks





Engraved by J. Cochran, from an Original Picture, painted for John Gladstone, Esq. of Seaford House, near Liverpool, by John Graham, Esq. of Edinburgh, three months previous to Mr. Huskisson's death.

THE RIGHT HONBLE WILLIAM HUSKISSON.

W. Huskisson.

and farm-houses. The evil spread rapidly, and in the disturbed counties all protection for property seemed to be at an end. Those labourers who did not kindle the incendiary fires, stood by, and refused to extinguish them; for they hoped that the general alarm would compel their employers to ameliorate their condition.

The death of Mr. Huskisson, who was run over by a locomotive engine at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, tended indirectly to weaken the ministry. There was a general impression that he had been harshly and unfairly treated by the Duke of Wellington, and as his death was occasioned by his descending from the railway carriage (during a temporary halt) for the purpose of being reconciled to the duke, his grace, however unfairly, was involved in fanciful responsibility for the loss of the lamented statesman. Such was the arduous condition of affairs abroad and at home, when the Wellington administration, under a new sovereign, met a new parliament.

II.

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CHAPTER V.

OVERTHROW OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S CABINET—
FORMATION OF EARL GREY'S ADMINISTRATION.

PARLIAMENT met for the despatch of business on the 2nd of November, 1830, when William IV. delivered his speech from the throne in person. The chief topics which it embraced were the change of the dynasty in France—the state of Belgium—and a proposed interference in the affairs of the Netherlands—a proposed recognition of Don Miguel as king of Portugal—a proposed settlement of the civil list and the regency—the disturbances in England—and the dangers apprehended from the agitation for the repeal of the Union in Ireland. Most of these topics were noticed in a way so indiscreet and offensive, that it would seem as if the authors of the speech had gone out of their way for the express purpose of provoking the hostility of the liberal party.

The allusion to the French revolution was as formal and laconic as possible, but similar reserve was not exhibited in speaking of the affairs of the Netherlands. "I have witnessed," said his Majesty, speaking not his own sentiments, but those of the cabinet, "with deep regret the state of affairs in the Low Countries. I lament that the enlightened administration of the king should not have preserved his dominions from revolt, and that the wise and prudent measure of submitting the desires and complaints of the people to the deliberations of an extraordinary meeting of

the states-general should have led to no satisfactory result. I am endeavouring, in concert with my allies, to devise such means of restoring tranquillity as may be compatible with the good government of the Netherlands, and with the future security of other states."

In this declaration the British government virtually took a share in the contest, which was yet undecided; it declared the king of the Netherlands an *enlightened* sovereign, and indirectly stigmatized the Belgians as rebels. The announcement that the allied powers were engaged in concerting measures to restore tranquillity and ensure the security of other states, clearly pointed to an armed interference for the purpose of re-establishing the arrangements made at the congress of Vienna, and this view is further confirmed by another passage in the speech, in which the king was made to say, "I am persuaded that my determination to maintain, in conjunction with my allies, *those general* treaties by which the political system of Europe has been established, will offer the best security for the repose of the world." Had these sentiments met the response which was expected, Europe would have been involved in a war of opinion, which would have convulsed the Continent from one end to the other. France, still full of revolutionary ardour, would have resisted every effort to bring Belgium once more under the dominion of Holland, and would have been forced, in self-defence, to raise against the Holy Alliance that insurrectionary spirit which was giving ominous signs of its existence in Spain, Germany, and Italy. A ministry which had invited such a conflict was predestined to effect the speedy ruin of England, or of itself.

The reference to Don Miguel, the absolutist usurper of Portugal, was equally unacceptable to the people of England. William IV. was made to say, "I have not yet accredited

my ambassador to the court of Lisbon; but the Portuguese government having consented to perform a great act of justice and humanity by the grant of a general amnesty, I think that the time may shortly arrive, when the interests of my subjects will demand a renewal of those relations which had so long subsisted between the two countries."

Considering how Don Miguel had insulted the British government, by wantonly violating treaties to which that government was a witness, if not a guarantee; the perfidy with which he had behaved, and the cruelties which he had perpetrated,—there was something most repulsive to British feeling in the proposed recognition of the sanguinary usurper. An amnesty from him could be nothing better than "a mockery, a delusion, and a snare;" Portugal has therefore reason to bless the overthrow of a cabinet which meditated the perpetuation of the odious tyranny under which it groaned and suffered.

The allusion to the agitation for the repeal of the Union in Ireland, had too much the semblance of a personal attack upon O'Connell, and was therefore not a little misplaced in a royal speech. The king said, "I cannot view without grief and indignation the efforts which are made to excite among my people a spirit of discontent and disaffection, and to disturb the concord which happily prevails between those parts of my dominions, the union of which is necessary to their common strength and their common happiness.

"I am determined to exert to the utmost of my power all the means which the law and the constitution have placed at my disposal for the punishment of sedition, and for the prompt suppression of outrage and disorder. I reflect with the highest satisfaction on the loyalty and affectionate attachment of the great body of my people."

O'Connell, at whom this withering denunciation was

directed, stood below the bar while the king spoke, and seemed to invite its application, and to take pride in watching its effect.

The debates which ensued were more than usually animated, interesting, and important. They displayed on the part of the opposition an earnest application of great constitutional principles at an important crisis—an uncompromising hostility, largely mingled with contempt towards the administration of the Duke of Wellington—and no very equivocal hopes of effecting its speedy overthrow. Among the ministers the duke himself was almost the only one who seemed to possess hope or courage; his confidence in himself continued undiminished, and he believed it still possible for him to reign alone. Earl Grey took the lead in assailing the ministry in the House of Lords; he reviewed and censured their whole course of policy, foreign and domestic, and then, with more than usual solemnity, pointed out the necessity of ensuring the permanence of our institutions by a timely and temperate reform. We must quote a passage which subsequent events have rendered for ever memorable in our constitutional history:—

“I do not look,” he said, “for defence to augmented establishments—to an increased army and navy—being convinced that such precautions will bring upon us the very dangers which we seek by their adoption to avoid. If we were to arm, as the noble lord has intimated we should, and as he said, all Europe was arming; if we were to adopt such a policy, in all probability, one short month would not pass without our being involved in a war with France. ‘You see,’ said the noble lord, the ‘danger around you; the storm is in the horizon, but the hurricane approaches. Begin then at once to strengthen your houses, to secure your windows, and to make fast your doors.’ But the mode in which this must be done, my lords, is by securing the

affections of your fellow-subjects, and by redressing their grievances—and, my lords, I will pronounce the word—by reforming parliament. Through my whole life I have advocated reform, and I have thought that, if it were not attended to in time, the people would lose all confidence in parliament, and we must make up our minds to witness the destruction of the constitution. I trust that it will not be put off as the Catholic question was put off, but considered in time, so that measures may be introduced by which gradual reform can be effected without danger to the institutions of the country. Whether it can be expected that ministers will bring forward such measures, I cannot say; but of this I am sure, that if they do not bring them forward, and carry them into effect, they will in time be pressed by this question, as they have been pressed by the question of Catholic emancipation, and compelled to yield to expediency what they refuse to concede upon principle. Perhaps in the early part of my life I have urged this question with the rashness of youth, but I have never thought that reform should be insisted on as a matter of popular right, nor have I ever advocated the principle of universal suffrage, which, on the contrary, has always seemed to me to be inconsistent with our institutions. We are now told, that every man who pays taxes has a right to participate in the choice of members of the legislature; we are told more than that—we are told that every man who contributes to the wealth of the country by his labour has a right to vote; we are told, indeed, that every man who has arrived at a full age is entitled to this privilege. These are principles which I must deny, and claims which I must oppose. The right of the people is to good government; and that is, in my judgment, inconsistent with universal suffrage under our present institutions. If suffrage be the right of all who pay a certain tax, then I say, that it

is in the limit, and not in the extension, of that privilege, that such right consists. I say, my lords, that preparation ought to be made to revise the constitution, to extend its blessings, and to secure the affection of the people, to ensure their tranquillity, and to confirm their confidence in the legislature, and in a king who only lives for the good of his subjects."

This impressive declaration produced a deep impression on the greater part of the House, but, to the great astonishment of parliament and the country, it called forth from the Duke of Wellington a rash declaration against all reform, as utterly unnecessary :—

"For my own part," said his Grace, "I will say, that I never heard that any country ever had a more improved or more satisfactory representation than this country enjoys at this moment. I do say, that this country has now a legislature more calculated to answer all the purposes of a good legislature than any other that can well be devised; that it possesses, and deservedly possesses, the confidence of the country; and that its discussions have a powerful influence in the country. And I will say further, that if I had to form a legislature, I would create one—not equal in excellence to the present, for that I could not expect to be able to do, but something as nearly of the same description as possible. I should form it of men possessed of a very large portion of the property of the country, in which the landlords should have a great preponderance. I therefore am not prepared with any measure of parliamentary reform, nor shall any measure of the kind be proposed by the government, as long as I hold my present position."

Such a declaration as this, at a time when events on the Continent had so strengthened popular convictions of the necessity of some change in the representation, was regarded

as little better than an insult to the common sense of the people. During the autumn, Wellington and Peel had visited Manchester and Birmingham, where they had been received with great enthusiasm, and feasted as the future patrons of some measure for giving representatives to these important towns. It is true that they made no promises or declarations for or against such a project, but their silence when allusions were made to it was naturally interpreted favourably; and hence, the duke's declaration was treated as a confession of having practised deception on the popular assemblies of the manufacturing towns. Peel had vainly endeavoured to persuade the duke that some concessions should be made to the people; and he showed a want both of foresight and firmness in continuing to hold office when he found the premier inflexible. Had he resigned, as a moderate reformer, he would soon have become the most popular and powerful minister that ever wielded the destinies of England. By remaining, he allowed himself to be regarded as the mere aid-de-camp of a military chief, whose despotic will was interposed between the wants of the nation and the wishes of the king.

In the Commons the debate was still more animated than in the Lords: Sir Robert Peel very vehemently reprobated the renewal of agitation in Ireland, and O'Connell replied in the following terms:—

“The duty that I have to perform to-night is to me extremely pleasing, as it affords me some opportunity of repelling calumny, and of vindicating my own motives. I do not stand forward to claim the favour of a hearing—assailed as I have been, I should have been entitled to it anywhere—but here I appear as the representative of the people, with almost as many constituents as any member who hears me, and with more than those of all the ministry combined. The members of government have carefully

satisfy the demands or expectations of the reformers. This only I now premise, deferring a fuller exposition of my sentiments to an opportunity when they can be regularly and seasonably explained."

Brougham renewed his attack on the administration with his usual power; and though there was no division, every one felt that the cabinet had been seriously damaged by the debate. Ministers had also the worst of the fight in some subsequent skirmishes; and finally, an act of inexplicable folly consummated their overthrow by rendering them infinitely more ridiculous than ever they were odious.

The king had been invited to dine with the corporation of the City of London on the 9th of November, Lord Mayor's day. The greatest preparations were made for so splendid a festival. The streets were to have been illuminated along the whole line of the procession, and many tasteful devices in coloured lamps and transparencies had been prepared; large sums had been paid for windows, and great numbers of persons had come from the country to see the show. Judicious and extensive precautions had been taken to prevent tumult, and to preserve order. The livery, to the number of six thousand, agreed to line the streets; and two thousand special constables had tendered their services to assist the police. Great then was the astonishment of the public to learn by a proclamation issued on Monday morning, the 8th of November, that the king's visit for the following day had not only been postponed, but that neither Lord Mayor's procession nor dinner was to take place; that the home-office had been in communication with some of the civic authorities the whole of the previous day; that two cabinet councils had been held, one of which lasted till midnight; and that, in consequence of these prolonged deliberations, the resolution of his Majesty had been formed,

though not without "the greatest reluctance and regret," to forego the satisfaction of his visit.

The first effect of this announcement was a panic among the monied interests in the city, and a sudden depression in the public securities, which fell nearly four per cent in one day. The second was a general dissatisfaction at the conduct of the ministry for postponing the visit, and for alleging apprehended tumult as the cause. It was easy to have foreseen that great crowds would assemble on so rare an occasion as the combination of civic pageantry with a court procession—the union of majesty with municipal splendour; and therefore, if the danger arose from the pressure of numbers, an earlier opportunity ought to have been taken to announce the change. At all events, it could not but be inferred that the government would afterwards satisfy the country that they acted upon the most irresistible information of treason or sedition in giving occasion to such a panic. We feel therefore that it is but justice to insert the Duke of Wellington's explanation of his conduct, delivered in reply to the Duke of Richmond on the same evening, (November 8th,) in the House of Lords:—

"Before I proceed to address myself to the subject before the House, I feel it necessary to say, that I am under great obligations to the noble duke for putting it in my power to explain the circumstances of the letter to which he has alluded. Before I begin, however, I wish to state, that I concur in the opinion delivered by the noble duke, that his Majesty is the most popular sovereign that ever reigned in this country; and still more, that he is a sovereign whose public and private conduct most deserves the popularity which he has obtained. The letter, however, which was last night written by the secretary of state, by command of his Majesty, to the Lord Mayor, was not in any manner

connected with that popularity; for his Majesty had never the slightest doubt of the attachment and loyalty of all the respectable portion of the citizens and inhabitants of the metropolis. I must begin, however, first of all, by putting your lordships in possession of a letter relating to myself, which I received the day before yesterday from the gentleman holding the situation of Lord Mayor elect for the City of London. That letter is as follows:—

“‘ From the station of Lord Mayor, to which I have been elected, numberless communications are made to me, both personally and by letter, in reference to the 9th, and it is on that account that I take the liberty of addressing your Grace. Although the feelings of all the respectable citizens of London are decidedly loyal, yet it cannot but be known there are, both in London, as well as the country, a set of desperate and abandoned characters, who are anxious to avail themselves of any circumstance, to create tumult and confusion, while all, of any respectability in the city, are vying with each other to testify their loyalty on the occasion. From what I learn, it is the intention of some of the desperate characters alluded to, to take the opportunity of making an attack on your Grace’s person on your approach to the hall. Every exertion on my part shall be used to make the best possible arrangement in the city; but should any sudden and violent attack be made in one quarter, any civil force alone might not be effectual, and I should not be doing my duty, after what I have heard, did I not take the liberty of suggesting to your Grace the propriety of your coming strongly and sufficiently guarded. I probably may be considered giving you needless trouble, but the respect which I, as well as every person who really wishes the welfare of the country, must have for your Grace, and the gratitude we owe you, has induced me to adopt this course.’

“ Hence, although I feel myself personally to be placed

under the same protection of the laws as any other subject in the kingdom, I did not think that I was justified in making confusion and tumult in the procession which was to attend his Majesty, by adopting the advice of the writer of this letter, and seeking protection from the civil and military power in such a way as would be likely to produce that very disturbance which all men were so anxious to avoid. Under these circumstances, when I received the letter I have referred to, I felt it my duty to refrain from attending at the city feast. My lords, I communicated this determination to my colleagues, and we concluded on that occasion, from that letter, and from other letters which I had received, and from letters received by my right honourable friend, the secretary of state, on the same subject, that it was very possible that a tumult would occur in the city on the occasion of his Majesty's visit, and we thought it our duty to recommend his Majesty to postpone his visit. And we were induced to come to this determination in consequence of all the information we received of various descriptions. We have no doubt, whatever, from the information conveyed to us from various quarters—information on which we could rely—that an attack would be made on the police—that there was a plan laid to extinguish the lights, and that a variety of attempts would be made to excite riot and disorder. My lords, we had no doubts that we should know how to repress those tumults; but I must say, that I considered it far preferable not to hazard the risk of riot and confusion occurring in the presence of the sovereign, and we therefore recommended the sovereign not to put himself in a situation to be the witness of such tumults. My lords, it was solely on this view that we recommended his Majesty to postpone his visit, as I conceive it impossible that such confusion and tumult should exist, without ending in bloodshed.

“The people, my lords, would be collected together to witness a pageant—the pageant of his Majesty going in state to visit the Corporation of the City of London, and confer on the Lord Mayor the honour of dining with him. His Majesty and his ministers, the great officers of state, and the foreign ambassadors, could not go to the City of London without causing a great collection of people, and making it very probable that riot and confusion would take place. I say, my lords, that there was a great chance—and a very great chance, that there would arise serious consequences to his Majesty’s subjects, and therefore we recommended his Majesty not to go. The noble duke (Richmond) has asked if the news of disorder and tumult was confined to the City of London, and if there were apprehensions of riot in other places? There were not. It was sufficient for me to know that there were such apprehensions in the city. With some parts of the country, other noble lords must be better acquainted than I am. The noble duke himself must know more than I do, as to the disposition of the people of Sussex. In Surrey, and one or two other counties, as is known to your lordships, there have been some disorders; there has been some stoppage of work in Lancashire, but I know nothing beyond these to disturb the national tranquillity at this moment. At the same time, I cannot doubt the truth of the information communicated by the Lord Mayor elect, namely, that there would have been tumult and confusion in the city, had the pageant taken place. After having said so much, I shall only add, that I have no objection whatever to produce the document asked for by the noble marquis; and I can assure your lordships that there is no inclination in the government of the country, or any other government that I am acquainted with, to do anything which is likely to disturb the peace of Europe.”

The sum and substance of this explanation was, that the citizens of London were prepared to receive their monarch with every mark of loyalty and respect; while some hot-headed and disappointed patriots were disposed to hiss and hoot the Duke of Wellington. The obvious remedy for any danger to be apprehended from such a cause was, simply that his Grace should stay at home. But no pains were taken to ascertain the correctness of the reports transmitted by the officious Alderman Key; there were two bodies, the Court of Aldermen, and the Committee of Preparations, which could have easily investigated the truth or falsehood of the menaced attack; but they were not even consulted; had they been, they would easily have exposed the exaggerated terrors of the Lord Mayor elect. That gentleman added to the absurdity, by declaring, that he never thought his letter would excite any alarm; to which was added a hint of his having miscalculated the amount of nerve possessed by the Duke of Wellington. It must, however, be said, that the recent scenes in Paris and Brussels had led all thinking men to apprehend the danger of popular excitement leading to results not originally contemplated, and that, had there been any foundation for the apprehensions of tumult and disorder which the cabinet professed to entertain, that their excess of caution would probably have been pardoned. But their fears were so visionary, their grounds of alarm so utterly absurd, and the consequences of the panic they excited so widely mischievous, that they were at once ridiculed for their terror, and condemned for their impolicy. The grave censure pronounced on them by Earl Grey, who at the same time vindicated his approbation of the recent French revolution, fairly represented the general sense of the thinking part of the community:—

“I certainly did, my lords,” he said, “express my appro-

bation of the conduct of the French people on a former occasion, but if it is necessary to recall to your lordships' recollection what fell from so humble an individual as myself, I took care to state, that all revolutions were in themselves bad, and could only be justified by a serious and plain necessity; but if they are necessary, my lords, I, for one, think we ought not to be deterred from making a revolution, if without that we cannot maintain or preserve our liberties. I approve of the late French revolution, because I think it was necessary, by the fatal attempt of the government to interfere with the liberties of the people—I say a fatal attempt, my lords, which, in their situation, left the French people no other chance but that of absolute submission or open resistance. On this principle I approve of the French revolution, admiring the great courage of the people in achieving the victory, and their great generosity after the contest was over. I hope that the ministers will agree with me, and as they have showed respect to the government of France, that they will show respect to the people of Belgium, by which alone I think they will ensure the peace of this country and the peace of Europe. So much, my lords, with reference to what occurred in the early part of the evening, and I now pass to a subject of more immediate importance—of more interest to the House, and one on which its attention has been lately fixed. I must say, that when I first read the letter this morning which appeared in the public prints—I must own that I felt something like humiliation—I felt the fullest regret and disappointment that such a letter was thought necessary by the government, being persuaded that it would not issue such a letter without first making inquiries, and obtaining information that the letter was necessary. Is this a moment to circulate accounts of public dangers unnecessarily? The noble duke will, I am sure, concur with me, that such

reports must increase the difficulties under which the country labours. We are engaged at present in difficult and even doubtful negotiations abroad, and such scenes will not contribute to their success. They are not likely to make foreign powers respect the British ministry. Such a state of things will not excite respect for the country abroad, or persuade foreign powers that the ministry are better able to fulfil their engagements than when they expect to be supported by a loyal people. I felt something like humiliation, something like disappointment and regret when I saw the announcement, though I knew nothing of the circumstances, of which I felt assured the ministers were aware, or they would never recommend such an important step. I felt assured that they must possess some information of which I knew nothing. Under all these painful feelings, I found one topic of consolation in its being avowed and declared that this measure was not in any manner necessary to provide for the safety of his Majesty. I feel assured, as a noble lord expressed himself on a former occasion, that if ever a monarch was firmly seated in the hearts of his people, it is the sovereign who at present sits on the throne of these realms. For him personally there was no apprehension of danger; and for him it was stated by the noble duke that no apprehension was felt. The noble duke has stated, however, on the authority of the letter from the Lord Mayor elect, that there was some danger of an attack on the person of the noble duke. I abhor all such attacks; and were I the political enemy of the noble duke, which I am not, I should readily place myself in any situation in which my services could defend the noble duke from any such attacks, which I consider as un-English in their character, as they are unmanly and ungenerous. I deprecate all such attacks, and I see with regret any such feelings arise in his Majesty's

shrunk from all populous places—scarcely one has been returned for more than a rotten borough; but I am sent here by a large body of the people, and claim to speak as their representative. First, I appeal to every man, whether the speech put into the mouth of the sovereign is not one of the most unsatisfactory discourses ever pronounced by the chief of a great nation? I speak of it both as it relates to foreign and to domestic concerns. I did not hear in it one word about the poverty and distress of the people in any part of the kingdom—not one word regarding relief. The rotten-borough system—the oligarchical mode of returning members to this House—is, I know, reckoned among the blessings of our condition; and for this reason, not a syllable is said respecting that distress, which the right honourable gentlemen were unable to deny. If there be no distress, why is night made horrible by fires, the blaze of which may be seen from the metropolis? Why are the people in a state of disturbance and insubordination within a short distance of the very seat of government? Is there no cause for this, and is the calumny to be pronounced upon the people of England, that they break out into acts of open violence without the pretence of suffering? Nothing is said about the alleviation of distress, and above all, nothing about the alleviation of the distress of Ireland. But I arraign the speech for what it says, or omits, on our foreign as well as our domestic policy. We have had excuses for not rejoicing in the success of the French people, and we have been told that much is due out of courtesy to the exiled family of France. Courtesy, indeed, towards a sovereign who wished to cut down and massacre his unoffending people without pity or remorse! Regret, ministers may feel—not at the unmerited sufferings of those people, but that the efforts of the king of France were not successful in riveting upon the French the chains of slavery. That

king and his ministers attempted to take away almost altogether the elective franchise from the French people, and to put down the liberty of the press. Who attempted to put down the liberty of the press here, and to prevent the expression of our popular sentiments in Ireland? Why, our attorney-general, and the lord-lieutenant of Ireland."

Lord Althorp pronounced the Whig declaration of war against the ministry. "I feel," he said, "that the country is in a most serious situation, requiring great skill on the part of those to whom its prosperity is entrusted, and because I do feel that great skill is necessary to guide us in our present serious situation, I also feel myself bound to state, that his Majesty's present ministers are not, in my mind, fit and equal to it. I say individually, that I have not confidence in them; still, if the measures they bring forward be such as I can conscientiously approve of, they shall have my best support without regard to the quarter originating them. I make this declaration for myself, and I believe I may add, on the part of those who usually act with me; but *feeling as I do towards the present ministers, I will add, that I should feel strongly disposed to support any measure, the tendency of which would be to dispossess them of their places.*"

Sir Edward Knatchbull, who was then regarded as the leader of the Tory opposition, avowed his hostility to the ministry in still stronger terms, and appealed to Mr. Hume for aid in opposing their measures; who promptly tendered his assistance, declaring that the favourable sentiments he entertained towards the cabinet in the preceding session had been entirely changed. The Marquis of Blandford went so far as to move an amendment on the address; which was, however, nothing more than a petulant and intemperate disquisition on the supposed demerits of the late parliament; and, singular enough, this amended address, which declared

that the parliament which had passed the Catholic Relief Bill "ought to be held in utter hatred and contempt," was seconded by Mr. O'Connell; it was not, however, pressed to a division.

The most remarkable incident in the debate, however, was the speech of Mr. Brougham; elevated in his own estimation and his parliamentary position by his recent election for Yorkshire, he put forth the whole strength of his excited energies in an overwhelming flood of sarcasm and invective. In reference to the ministry, he said:—

"I know of no danger which can render hostilities more certain, and none more liable to bring them home to us—nothing more liable to make wide-spread war abroad crush and overwhelm us, than for us to adopt those of the Holy Alliance, which are contained and embodied in the king's speech. Let it not be said that ministers, the most feeble, the most unable to manage the government, of any ministers into whose hands by a strange combination of accidents the government of this country ever fell—let it not be said that they, who were hardly sufficient to manage the routine of official business in the calmest times—who were not able to manage the business of this House in ordinary times—will never deem themselves sufficient to manage the business of a great and complicated war; and they who were unable to steer the bark in the fairest weather, will never court the tempest and defy the storm. Let that not be said; for I am aware that headstrong men are very apt to underrate their weakness and overrate their power, and that no men are more apt to deem failure impossible, than those who cannot calculate the danger. The ministers are but men, and they are surrounded with busy, meddling, buzzing, personages, who encourage a little alarm—who think no harm can come of a little terror—who insinuate that negotiations may attract attention—who hope much

from congresses—who just wish that they may be doing something—who do not like to be doing nothing and being nobody—who wish for something to make a display in parliament, and a puff in the public prints—and who are not at all adverse to have a congress at *Lunnan*, which will have two or three advantages; it will enable them to be important, who do not like to let other people work; who wish to have all the work and all the honour to themselves—who like to have it all their own way—to be their own minister, their own ambassador, their own general; and then they know that the people of *Lunnan* like to see foreigners, and they hope by these little amusements and diversions to tide over the session. First, things of little importance will be made great subjects, and perhaps they are great subjects to the faculties of those who would be called on to discuss them when the congress was assembled. With a view of preventing war, we should have protocols and conferences full of sound and of no meaning, but which might affect the parliament, and call forth all the resources of the cabinet. But, let them not suppose, when they have gone so far, that they will be able to stop short just when they like, for I can assure them that, if they interfere, war will be inevitable. I must here say, that as a general principle, I will support measures that I approve of, let who will propose them, and I will oppose bad measures, let them come from whom they may.”

His peroration, which was pointed and powerful, must not be omitted:—

“ I have no fear that the revolution of that country should spread into this, as has been insinuated in a passage of the speech. I think I speak advisedly, when I say that there is no danger of any such events occurring in this country. We are safe, not because of the wisdom of the king’s government—not because of the care of ministers—not because of

congresses—not because of negotiations ; but this land is safe, its monarch is safe, its parliament is safe, its institutions are safe—safe from the contagion we only witness at a distance—safe from the contagion of a revolution, because the constitution has got in it none of that rottenness on which contagion can fix its hold. It has in it none of the pabulum which can support the disease. There may be a few misguided men—a few discontented spirits ; but the law is sufficient to cope with them. The people, I am persuaded, are sound at heart. They love the monarchy. The people might love a republic in America, but we do not love it ; we love our parliament ; I heartily wish it were purer, and then we should have nothing to fear ; we prefer our limited king, our limited crown, I will use the word prefer, because I know that it is made the shibboleth of a party : then I say, the people of England prefer a limited monarchy, and with that an aristocracy, for an aristocracy is a necessary part of a limited monarchy ; the people of England prefer a limited monarchy to a republic, which may be suitable to another country. The people of England are quiet, because they love their institutions. I wish well to the rights of the people, and by these rights I am resolved to live, being ready to perish with these rights, and for them, because I, for one, think these rights are understood by the people, and are appropriate to their character and temper. Limited monarchy and aristocracy are the best security for these rights, and I, for one, wish for no change ; I wish for no revolution ; and I speak, I am sure, the sentiments of the great bulk of the people, who love the institutions of their country, who love monarchy, and love nobility ; because with the rights and liberties of the people themselves these are all knit up together. They have a strong attachment to one form of government ; and I would infinitely rather, if all these must perish, perish with them, than survive to read

on the ruins the memorable lesson of the instability of the best human institutions."

The discussion was renewed with fresh vigour on the following night, when the report on the address was taken into consideration. Mr. Maberley led the way in denouncing the Duke of Wellington's speech of the preceding evening. He was followed by Mr. Tennyson, who, though he represented a rotten borough, urged strenuously the absolute necessity of a speedy reform in parliament. Mr. John Wood, then member for Preston, went much farther; he stigmatized the Duke of Wellington as the "dictator of the government, who had declared that the people did not want reform, and should not have it; to whom, in the name of the people, he replied, that they did want reform, and that they should have it." Lord Morpeth, whose character for moderation and good sense gave great weight to his words, declared, that "unless ministers were prepared to introduce such a measure of reform as would satisfy the just expectations of the country, they would pronounce against themselves the severest censure of incapacity that could be uttered." Messrs Weyland and Robinson accused the cabinet of insensibility to the sufferings of the people. Mr. Alderman Waithman reproached them with blindness to the signs of the times, and declared that the reform which they now insanely opposed would soon become irresistible, and then it would come upon them "like a thief in the night." Even many stanch supporters of government adopted on this occasion the language of reproach and complaint, evincing a very suspicious readiness

"To hint a fault, and hesitate dislike."

The first cabinet minister who undertook the defence of himself and his colleagues, was Sir George Murray, the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, and who must have felt that he was personally pointed at in the many sarcasms

directed against the military character of the government. He usually spoke with the blunt frankness of a soldier, but on this occasion he attempted to explain away the Duke of Wellington's recent declaration against reform, and utterly failed. In a hesitating and timid manner, he said:—

“ His Majesty's speech has been objected to because it contained no allusion to parliamentary reform. But surely the omission was a very proper one. Upon parliamentary reform there is a great variety of opinion, and it is much better for the government to let the subject come, as it undoubtedly will—and there is a specific notice of motion upon it already given, before the House—than to take up any particular position with respect to it in the royal speech. Upon the subject of a reform in parliament, I will, (if I may be permitted to allude to what has fallen from a noble lord opposite, last night,) say, as that noble lord had said upon another matter, that I will listen attentively to the propositions which may be made, and will adopt that course which I really believe to be the most likely to benefit the country. Upon the subject of reform I have my own general opinions, but I will shape my conduct as I think best for the interests of the country.”

Mr. Denman, who had obtained a seat in the new parliament for Nottingham, completely demolished the feeble speech of the colonial secretary. Lord Francis Leveson Gower declared, that “ though his opinion on the subject of parliamentary reform was unchanged, he was bound to say, that he saw as plain as any man the tide which ran so strong in favour of that question in the country.” Several other members implored the ministers to recover popular favour by timely concession ; and their appeals were not ineffective, for it was with very obvious embarrassment of manner that Sir Robert Peel said: “ The discussion that has just taken place imposes on me the duty of making one or two obser-

vations on the subject of parliamentary reform, respecting which the honourable and learned member for York had so recently given notice of a motion. This task I would rather on the present occasion have avoided, as I am unwilling to express an opinion on such a question, until it shall have been legitimately brought under the consideration of the House. A construction, however, has been put on the declarations of my right honourable friend, which deprives me of an alternative. With regard to the question generally, I may remark, that I have never hitherto taken a very decided part. Opposed to it, I admit, I certainly have been, but at the same time, with very few exceptions, I have contented myself with a silent vote. It appears that a passage in the speech of my right honourable friend has been interpreted as expressive of the sentiments of government generally on the subject. Now, I fully admit, that I see difficulties about the question of reform, which I am by no means prepared to solve. I wish, nevertheless, to say nothing that may in any degree prejudice the discussion hereafter, or interfere with its advancement to a satisfactory termination. I see considerable difficulties attendant on the mere agitation of the topic, and I confess myself at a loss to conjecture the principle of limitation which the honourable and learned member appears to contemplate as the guarantee of a moderate reform. The member for Nottingham, (Mr. Denman,) had intimated, as I understood him, that no measure of reform which still allowed of the interference of peers in the return of members to the House of Commons, would satisfy him. His argument, I conclude, from the tenour of his speech, must be directed against an aristocratic government altogether. To such an extent I am not prepared to go; nor do I, at present, see any prospect that such a measure of safe, moderate reform, as his Majesty's government may be inclined to sanction, will

subjects. From the threats against the noble duke, I think he took a wise resolution, in abstaining from filling his place at the ceremony. The danger of the noble duke is, however, the prominent feature of the Lord Mayor's letter; it contains no proof of any danger which ought to have prevented his Majesty from attending in the city. Some other apprehensions are referred to—it is loosely stated, that placards, threatening riots, had been exhibited; that the police was to be attacked; that some ill-affected persons were prepared to make confusion; and that at night there was a great probability that they would make tumults and disorders. My lords, I say all this is very loose, for at what time does a great town like this metropolis not contain among the mass of its inhabitants many evil-disposed spirits, and to whom large assemblages of the people will not give an opportunity of committing many evil acts, and creating riot and disorder? If the noble duke waits till there is no danger of any riots occurring, his Majesty will never be able to show himself to his admiring people, for there can never be a considerable number of the people assembled on any public occasion, when his Majesty may not be exposed to similar riots. Nothing therefore is, I think, more unsatisfactory than the noble duke's explanation. If such a communication as that letter were sent to me, I should make it my first business to inquire into all the circumstances of the case, and I should not rely implicitly on the statement of any Lord Mayor. My lords, we have seen on a former occasion a Lord Mayor, who claimed a great reputation for his temerity, but whose principal failing was, I believe, his timidity, who made false representations under its influence relative to the riots of 1780, and who was, I believe, prosecuted for that in a court of justice. Remembering this, my lords, and knowing nothing of the character of the Lord Mayor elect, who may be inclined to magnify

dangers, and possibly anticipate a disturbance without any good reason, I should have made a diligent inquiry into all the circumstances on which he founded his opinion. I took it for granted that the noble duke must have made such inquiries, that he was convinced that the Lord Mayor had not seen objects in a false light; and that he was satisfied, from the information he had received, that there was no other way to avoid danger, than the advice he had given to his Majesty. If this were the case, I could make no objection to his conduct. On this subject I have not much information, but since I came into the House, I have heard something of the proceedings of the Court of Aldermen, which makes me inclined to think that the circumstances of the case have not received due consideration. The Court of Aldermen has examined the subject, and has come to the resolution, that every precaution had been taken — that there was no cause to apprehend any real danger to his Majesty, and that the Lord Mayor was not authorized to make the communication he had made to his Majesty's government. This information has been derived from authority, and has been delivered from the Court of Aldermen in another place. Under such circumstances, I think the advice which has been given to his Majesty is not justified. I could not help saying this, but more than this I will not say. I repeat, that the advice given to the crown was not authorized by a sound judgment. I am consoled by reflecting that the unpopularity mentioned does not affect the sovereign, but only the noble duke. The existence of that feeling is not unaccountable; but any overt acts resulting from it I shall always discountenance. For the rest, my lords, I see no foundation for any extreme alarm as to the situation of the country, and nothing to make me regard our domestic peace as likely to be interrupted."

In the House of Commons Sir Robert Peel justified the

apprehensions of the government by quoting some seditious placards, which would indeed have afforded a valid excuse had their origin been above suspicion. In conclusion, he urged the following considerations:—

“ I know the disappointment which has been experienced by the necessity of postponing the civic entertainment. I know that great sacrifices have been made by many classes of his Majesty’s faithful subjects to pay every honour to him during his visit to the city. I was this day waited upon by the deputies of various trades, which had undertaken to protect the peace during various portions of the procession, and I could not hear without regret the expressions of disappointment they uttered at finding that, though their Majesties had full confidence in the exertions of their loyalty, they were not to have the proud gratification of escorting them upon their entrance into the city. With a full knowledge of all these circumstances, I cannot help thinking that the disappointment occasioned by not holding this festival is a very subordinate consideration indeed, when placed in the balance against the maintenance of the public peace. These, sir, are the grounds on which the members of his Majesty’s government came to the unanimous resolution of advising his Majesty that this occasion should not be given for assembling on a November night an immense concourse of people of all descriptions. I sincerely believe, that if they were assembled, the public peace would be disturbed. I sincerely believe, that recourse to military authority might be necessary for its preservation, and that in the struggle to secure it, numbers of unsuspecting and unoffending persons must unavoidably be sacrificed. If such results were probable, I ask again, whether it was not our duty, as the responsible ministers of the crown, to advise his Majesty to forego the satisfaction of visiting the City of London, in order to spare him

and his consort the permanent pain of having been unconsciously the cause of bloodshed and suffering to their unoffending subjects? I know not whether the House will approve of the course which we have adopted on this occasion. I know that it will be said that the government is unpopular, whilst his Majesty is most enthusiastically beloved by his people. It is my duty to bear that taunt, rather than forbear from giving that advice, of which the adoption is calculated to secure the tranquillity of the metropolis—to prevent the loss of life—and to prevent, above all, any addition to that excitement of feeling which is at present so much to be deplored. I will submit to any taunt founded on the obloquy or objectionable character of the ministry among the people, rather than give them any cause for excitement which I can possibly avoid.”

This vindication was very coldly received by the House in general, and was not a little derided by the opposition. Its effect was completely destroyed by a crushing answer:—

“My conscientious opinion,” said Mr. Brougham, “is, that his Majesty may go safely to Guildhall now, without suffering any inconvenience, save that arising from the pressure occasioned by the eager wishes of his affectionate and faithful subjects to behold him; ay, as safely as he confessedly could have done before the country heard the speech from the throne. I must regret that a trial was not made of the affection which his people bear to his Majesty. But perhaps the error, if it be one, is on the safe side. I cannot, however, help thinking, that it is a little hard on his Majesty, that in consequence of nothing—not even a syllable—having been said in the proclamation of this morning as to whose unpopularity it is that causes the postponement of the civic festivities, it should be made to appear as if it were the unpopularity of the king, and not that of his ministers. Whereas it now appears, on the

showing of one of the ministers themselves, that if his Majesty would go to Guildhall, and if the Duke of Wellington would stay at home, the king, being unattended by his unpopular companion, would be received with the most sincere and heartfelt exultation by a loyal, an affectionate, and a grateful people, whilst the noble duke being left at home to defend his own house would, from his well-known gallantry, find no person hardy enough to attack it. I regret much the appearance of the letter this morning—I regret it on account of the mischief which it is certain to cause in the mercantile world—I regret it also on account of its apparent connection with that speech from the throne, followed up as that fatal speech has been, by the still more fatal declaration of the Duke of Wellington against every species of reform—a declaration to which, in my conscience, I believe, he owes nine-tenths of his present unpopularity. I wish that that declaration had not been made. I wish also that I had not lived to see the day when a forgetfulness of those invaluable services in the field—which have made for the Duke of Wellington as a soldier, a general, and a conqueror, a great, a brilliant and imperishable renown—coupled with a deviation by the noble duke from his own sphere of life into the labyrinths of politics, and with an attempt on his part to shine as a great statesman—a character which nature, that formed him a great general, never intended that he should become—I wish, I repeat, that I had not lived to see the day when the forgetfulness of his great merits by the rabble—a forgetfulness never to be pardoned, always to be condemned, for no deficiency on the part of the Duke of Wellington as a politician ought to eradicate the gratitude which we all owe to him as a soldier; and even as a statesman he is not without his merits—I wish to heaven, I once more repeat, that I had not lived to see the day when the forgetfulness of the people

to the merits of the soldier, and the forgetfulness of the soldier to his own proper sphere of greatness, has displayed to England, to Europe, and to the world, that the Duke of Wellington cannot accompany his Majesty on his journey into the heart of an attached and loyal population."

Still more remarkable was the speech of Sir James Graham, who said:—

"In reference to this question, the Duke of Wellington has declared himself against all reform; and the right honourable baronet, (Sir Robert Peel,) has declared himself unable to see his way, and that he can give no opinion upon it. His Majesty's ministers therefore, and the public, have come to an issue upon the great question, whether it is expedient that the state of the representation shall be considered, with a view to its alteration. That is the point upon which they have come to an issue; and as far as I can see, the declaration which has been made by the Duke of Wellington against reform, and the sentiments which have been expressed by the right honourable baronet, have in an incredibly short period of time effected the greatest possible change in the sentiments of the public with regard to the ministry. The right honourable gentleman, in his letter published this morning, has stated that it would be dangerous for his Majesty to go in procession to the city 'by night.' Why, within one short week from that day, his Majesty had gone in a procession 'by night;' he had gone to the theatre, and he had encountered no danger whatever, but was, on the contrary, rewarded by the most loyal and enthusiastic demonstrations of affection on the part of an attached and devoted people. What had since intervened? That celebrated declaration of his Majesty's prime minister, that nothing should induce him to discuss the question of reform, and that if it should be brought forward by others, it would be opposed by him. From

coming into contact with a great body of constituents, I am tolerably well acquainted with the opinions of the population of this country, and I will say upon this point, in reference to which the Duke of Wellington has declared, that he will concede nothing, that his Grace is at direct issue with the people of England; and when I say the people of England, I mean not merely the lower orders, but the middle classes of society, in conformity with whose sentiments the government must be conducted, or it cannot stand. The right honourable baronet has himself, upon a former occasion, stated, that he rested upon public opinion, and that he was ready to stand or fall by its decision. Now, public opinion demanded a reform of the representation in the Commons House of Parliament; and while the right honourable baronet and his colleagues declare that they will not grant it, the people of England say that it must be granted, or that there will be no peace in the country, and no security for property. This is the point on which the ministers and the people of England have come to an issue, and which, I hope, will soon be brought to trial. I trust, therefore, that no premature discussion will be introduced with regard to the confidence of parliament in ministers, but that upon the great question of reform the decision of the House will be taken. The declaration of the Duke of Wellington, which has rendered him so unpopular, has astounded, alarmed, and confounded the people of England. The noble duke previously enjoyed a portion of the confidence of the public, but that declaration has made him the most unpopular minister that was ever known in England. At the same time I must say, and I say so from the bottom of my heart, that any act of personal violence offered to the noble duke, would be a stain upon the annals of this country, which years of future glory could never wash away. I do hope, whatever opinion may exist as to the civil conduct of his Grace, that eternal

gratitude, which he deserves, for his splendid military services, for his dauntless valour, and for his glorious achievements, will wait on him, and that his person or his life will never be placed in hazard in this country. I fear that the noble duke is too fond of ruling alone, and that he is passionately attached to that policy which he thinks right, but I trust that the noble duke will not continue obstinately to pursue a line of policy which may place the peace and prosperity of the country in jeopardy; and in my conscience, I believe, that public opinion has pronounced—decidedly pronounced—against the policy of the noble duke.”

Sir Robert Peel was obviously aware of the perplexing position in which he had unwarily become involved, and he sought by the most bland compliments to soothe the leaders of the opposition. But the Whigs now felt that the hour of their triumph was at hand, and they met his conciliatory overtures with defiance.

On the following evening Mr. George Alexander Dawson added to the excitement of the period by a personal attack on the Irish agitator. O’Connell replied in a still more vituperative style, and used language which from any other person must have been followed by a duel; but as he had declared that he would not a second time expose himself to the risk of taking human life, he received from Mr. Dawson the following severe castigation, which was not wholly undeserved:—

“I,” said he, “did not hear with any indignation the observations which he made on my being a clerk in a public office, with a large salary, because I knew, that to be the object of such observations is the fate of every man who holds public office, and because I feel that it is language which he is liable to hear at any time from a man of vulgar mind and mean ideas. But when the honourable and learned member indulges in aspersions on my private character—

when he states as a reflection upon me, that I am no longer the representative of Derry, though he knows that I lost my seat for conscientiously supporting his claims as a Roman Catholic to emancipation, and for assisting to give him privileges which he now uses to promote agitation in Ireland—when he presumes, (and I use the word advisedly,) to touch upon my private conduct, I have a right to say this much, at least, to him, that I have had the misfortune in my time to receive his praises and encomiums, and that I have now, thank God, the good fortune to be made the object of his calumnies and slanders. He knows well that he dared not have uttered a tenth part of the calumnious falsehoods which he has vomited against me, if he had not determined to cover himself with the mantle of a most disgraceful indemnity. (Cries of ‘order,’ ‘order.’) Well, I will pursue that subject no further. I will only say, that I despise anything that the honourable and learned member can say of me, as much as it is possible for one man to despise the opinion of another.”

Here this disgraceful scene terminated; neither of the actors improved their position in public estimation by their conduct on the occasion; and as Mr. Dawson was supposed to have acted at the instigation of his brother-in-law, a portion of the odium which he incurred devolved on Sir Robert Peel.

On the 12th of November the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced to the House the ministerial plan for the settlement of the Civil List in the new reign. His statement was so involved and complicated, as to be scarcely intelligible. The king’s speech had promised the surrender to the nation of the casual and hereditary revenues of the crown; from the chancellor’s statement it appeared that the profits of the duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster were still to be reserved; and Mr. Brougham very severely reprobated the deception

which he asserted to have been practised on the House. The debate was adjourned to Monday the 15th instant, when Sir Henry Parnell, on the ground of want of confidence in the ministry, moved for a special committee of inquiry. The motion was opposed by Messrs. Calcraft and Herries, both members of the government; and it was supported by Lord Althorp, Mr. Bankes, Mr. Wynne, and Mr. Holmes Sumner. On a division, 204 voted for the government, and 233 against, leaving the ministers in a minority of twenty-nine. This result had not been anticipated by the opposition. While the members who went out for the amendment, remained in the lobby, Mr. Brougham addressed them, and requested them not to go away after the division; for that if they were defeated on that amendment, it was the intention of Mr. Bankes, the member for Dorsetshire, to move another, for the appointment of a committee to inquire into all the items of the Civil List, after the first three. The announcement of the numbers revealed the triumph of the opposition, and the defeat of the ministers, not a little to the surprise of both parties. Mr. Hobhouse asked Sir Robert Peel whether it was the intention of ministers to retain their places, after so decisive an expression of the opinion of the House? No answer being given, he was about to bring the matter to an issue by a motion, when Mr. Brougham interfered; suggesting that the question, though natural, was premature—and it was not pressed. On the following evening, Sir Robert Peel announced the resignation of himself and his colleagues, in the following terms:—

“Sir,—The deep and unfeigned respect which I owe to this House, induces me to take the earliest opportunity of publicly stating here in my place, that in consequence of what occurred last night, I have felt it my duty to wait upon the King, and humbly and respectfully to inform his

Majesty, that I perceive it is no longer in my power to undertake the administration of public affairs, so far as the administration of those affairs depends upon me, either with satisfaction to my own feelings, or with perfect advantage to the country.

“Sir, his Majesty has been graciously pleased to accept the resignation thus tendered on my part, and I have to inform the House, therefore, that I consider myself as holding the seals of the Home Department only until his Majesty shall have been enabled to appoint a successor to me, in the office which I have resigned.

“The same, sir, is the case with the other members of the government. They all consider themselves as holding their respective offices only until their successors shall be appointed.”

A similar announcement was made by the Duke of Wellington, in the House of Lords. It was subsequently known that the ministers had come to this resolution, not so much in consequence of the vote on the Civil List, as from anticipation of a more dangerous defeat on Mr. Brougham's proposition for reform in parliament, which was to have been brought forward on the very evening that the announcement was made. But under any circumstances, the Wellington administration could not have held power any longer; the majority that decided against them, was the result of a stern and settled system of opposition, not of accidental circumstances, and there can be little doubt that on any subsequent trial of strength, the majority against them would have increased rather than diminished.

As it would have been obviously inconvenient to have the question of reform brought forward under such circumstances, Mr. Brougham was requested to defer his motion until a new administration was formed.

Lord Althorp said,—“In consequence of the communication which we have just received from the right honourable baronet, I am sure that every gentleman will feel that it would be most improper and most incorrect, to undertake any serious and important debate under such circumstances. There is no longer any administration in existence; and I hope that my honourable and learned friend (Mr. Brougham), will not submit to the House this evening, a question of so much importance as that of which he has given notice. In my memory, no important question has ever been discussed under such circumstances; and I trust, therefore, that for this reason, as well as for the advantage of the question, my honourable friend will comply with the suggestion I now make to him.”

This was so reasonable a request, that it ought to have been complied with as a matter of course; but Mr. Brougham felt, or affected to feel, great reluctance in yielding. He replied in a speech, on which subsequent events furnished an edifying commentary; it was the first incident in a new career, which rendered him in a few years the most distrusted of statesmen, after having long been the most popular of politicians.

Mr. Brougham said,—“I am sure that the respect which I feel for this House is, on all occasions, fully equal to that which has been so fitly and so gracefully expressed by the right honourable secretary. I do, however, feel the greatest repugnance to putting off the motion which stands for this evening. My noble friend (Lord Althorp) near me, is quite right in saying that no question of so much importance has ever before been brought forward, when there was a deficiency in the effective government; but my difficulty is this; namely, that no question of so much importance—no question involving such mighty and extensive interests—has ever yet been discussed at all under any circumstances within the walls of

this House : sensible, therefore, of the deep responsibility which I have incurred in undertaking to bring forward a question of such vast importance, I cannot help feeling the difficulty in which I am placed, in being called on by my noble friend to defer it—especially as the suggestion of my noble friend has been backed in some degree by the expression of similar opinions on the part of others—I am anxious of course, both from the respect I owe to the House, and out of regard to the interests of the question itself, to defer to the declared sense of the House, both as to the shape in which I shall bring forward the motion, and as to the manner in which I shall bring it forward, as well as in respect to the time at which I shall bring it forward.

“I throw myself, therefore, fully, freely, and respectfully upon the House. If the motion be put off, I own it will be contrary to my opinion, and to my wishes : the House may be right, or it may be wrong ; I may be right, or I may be wrong ; but I think that I am right, and I beg it therefore to be understood, that what I do, I do in deference to the wishes of the House. And further, as no change that may take place in the administration can by any possibility affect me, I beg it to be understood, that in putting off the motion, I will put it off until the 25th of this month, and no longer. I will then, and at no more distant period, bring forward the question of parliamentary reform, whatever may be the condition of circumstances, and whosoever may be his Majesty’s ministers.”

The last sentence obviously implied either that Mr. Brougham was determined not to accept office, or that he was convinced that no party which might rise to power, would ever be willing to trust him with a share of the administration. If the latter was intended, it was assuredly a correct opinion ; for the *Memoirs of Romilly* prove that

Mr. Brougham did not enjoy the implicit confidence of the party with which he usually acted.

As it seemed not improbable that Lord Althorp's statement might cause some misapprehension in the public mind—

Sir Robert Peel said, "I feel it necessary in order to guard against misunderstanding, to trespass, again, for a few moments on the attention of the House. I am not apprehensive of anything I have said being misunderstood here; but in order to guard against any misapprehension going forth to the country, I may be allowed to notice one expression which fell from the noble lord (Althorp) opposite. I know very well what the noble lord meant, but out of doors the expression to which I allude may possibly be misconstrued. The noble lord said, 'There is no longer any administration in existence.' This is, no doubt, in effect, true; but it ought to be generally known and understood, that until my successor is appointed, I am in full possession of the authority of the Secretary of State for the Home Department; and that I am quite prepared, if public necessity should require me, to exercise that authority to its utmost extent; being quite confident that I shall receive the support of this House, and of the country, if I exert that authority in any case in which the public welfare calls for the exertion of it."

This declaration was loudly cheered, and there seemed to be an impression in the House that Sir Robert Peel had been to some extent sacrificed by the Duke of Wellington. There were some even then who hoped that Peel might coalesce with the party about to come into power, especially as the ultra-tory party, which had taken so active and energetic a share in his overthrow, had manifestly acted in the mere spirit of vengeance; having formed no plan of their own, and having taken no steps to claim for themselves any share in the administration about to be formed. In reply to Sir Robert Peel—

Lord Althorp said, "I assure the right honourable secretary that I did not misunderstand him. God forbid that I should have imputed to him any disposition to allow the public service to suffer injury in consequence of the changes which are about to take place. All I meant was, that under such circumstances, motions of so much importance as that of my honourable and learned friend, have never been discussed in parliament."

Sir R. Peel merely added,—“My explanation was intended to prevent misconception out of doors. I was well aware that the noble lord had not misunderstood me.”

Thus ended the Wellington administration; destroyed by the exclusiveness of its despotic chief, who was unwilling to strengthen his cabinet by the admission of men of influence and talent, as such men would not submit in all things implicitly to his will. Both the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel concurred in advising the king to entrust the formation of a new administration to Earl Grey. That venerable nobleman was accordingly invited by the king to form a new cabinet, and he accepted the office on the condition that he should have authority to make Parliamentary Reform a ministerial measure.

We give as an appendix to this long chapter, a list of the Grey and the Wellington officers of state; our readers will see that the change in the government was complete, and that it extended to many subordinate offices not always involved in the fate of a cabinet.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV.

COMPARATIVE LIST OF THE GREY AND WELLINGTON ADMINISTRATIONS.

<i>Offices.</i>	<i>Appointments.</i>	<i>In the room of</i>
<i>First Lord of the Treasury</i>	Earl Grey.....	Duke of Wellington.
<i>Lord Chaceellor</i>	Lord Brougham	Lord Lyndhurst.
<i>Lord President of the Council</i>	Marquis of Lansdowne	Earl Bathurst.
<i>Privy Seal</i>	Lord Durham	Earl of Rosslyn.
<i>Home Secretary</i>	Viscount Melbourne...	Sir R. Peel.
<i>Under Home Secretary</i>	Hon. G. Lamb.....	Mr. Yates Peel.
<i>Colonial Secretary</i>	Viscount Goderich ...	Sir G. Murray.
<i>Under Secretary of the Colonies</i> ..	Viscount Howick.....	Mr. Horace Twiss.
<i>Foreign Secretary</i>	Viscount Palmerston	Earl of Aberdeen.
<i>Chaceellor of the Exchequer</i>	Viscount Althorp	Mr. Goulburn.
<i>First Lord of the Admiralty.</i>	Sir J. Graham	Viscount of Melville.
<i>President of the Board of Control</i>	Right Hon. C. Grant	Lord Ellenborough.
<i>President of the Board of Trade</i> }	Lord Auckland	Mr. Herries.
<i>Master of the Mint</i>	Lord Holland	Mr. Arbuthnot.
<i>Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster...</i>	Marquis of Anglesea...	Duke of Northumberland.
<i>Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland</i>	Duke of Devonshire...	Mr. of Jersey.
<i>Lord Chamberlain</i>	Duke of Richmond ...	Duke of Manchester.
<i>Postmaster-General</i>	Earl of Albemarle ...	Duke of Leeds.
<i>Master of the Horse</i>	Marquis of Wellesley	Duke of Buckingham.
<i>Lord Stecard</i>	Hon. A. Ellis	Lord Lowther.
<i>Woods and Forests</i>	Mr. R. Grant	Sir J. Beckett.
<i>Judge Advocate</i>	Lord John Russell ...	Mr. Calcraft.
<i>Paymaster-General</i>	Mr. C. P. Thomson ...	F. Lewis.
<i>Vice-President of Board of Trade</i> }	Mr. F. G. S. Stanley	Sir H. Hardinge.
<i>and Treasurer of the Navy</i>	Sir. W. Gordon	Viscount Beresford.
<i>Secretary for Ireland</i>	Sir R. Spencer	Sir H. Fane.
<i>Master-General of the Ordnance</i> ...	{ Mr. Edward Ellice	Mr. Joseph Planta.
<i>Surveyor-General of the Ordnance</i>	{ Mr. Spring Rice ...	Mr. G. R. Dawson.
<i>Secretaries of the Treasury</i>	Viscount Anson	Lord Maryborough.
<i>Master of the King's Buck Hounds</i>	Mr. Denman(knighted)	Sir J. Scarlett.
<i>Attorney-General</i>	Mr. Horne (knighted)	Sir E. B. Sugden.
<i>Solicitor-General</i>	Lord Plunkett	Sir A. Hart.
<i>Lord Chancellor for Ireland</i>	Mr. Pennefather	Mr. Joy.
<i>Attorney-General for Ireland</i>		Mr. Doherty.
<i>Solicitor-General for Ireland</i>	Mr. Francis Jeffery ...	Sir John Rae.
<i>Lord Advocate for Scotland</i>	Mr. James Cockburn	Mr. Hope.
<i>Solicitor-General for Scotland</i>		

New Treasury Board.—Charles Earl Grey; the Right Hon. John Charles Spencer (commonly called Viscount Althorp); the Right Hon. George, Baron Nugent; Robert Vernon Smith, Esq.; Francis Thornhill Baring, Esq.; and the Hon. George Ponsonby.

New Admiralty Board.—The Right Hon. Sir James Robert George Graham, Bart.; Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, Bart., K.C.R., Rear-Admiral of the White Squadron of his Majesty's fleet; the Hon. George Heneage Lawrence Dundas, C.B., Rear-Admiral of the Blue Squadron of his Majesty's fleet; Sir Samuel John Brooke Pechell, Bart., C.B., Captain in the Royal navy; and the Hon. George Rarrington, Captain in the Royal navy.

CHAPTER VI.

FORMATION AND PRINCIPLES OF EARL GREY'S ADMINISTRATION.

WITHIN a week after the dissolution of the Wellington administration, the new government was complete in all its departments. It was not purely Whig; it contained one leading member of the old Tory party, the Duke of Richmond, who entered the cabinet with the office of Postmaster-General, and a considerable admixture of those who had been the adherents of Canning and Huskisson, all of whom had held office with the leaders of the destroyed administration. The only embarrassment which Earl Grey had to encounter was from Mr. Broughman, who had set his heart on the woolsack and a peerage, and would not be contented with any inferior situation. Formidable to his friends by his indiscretion and over-weening ambition, still more formidable to his enemies by his unscrupulous bitterness and unrivalled powers of sarcasm, he was equally dangerous to be obliged or to be neglected; and his capricious conduct delayed for two or three days the success of the ministerial negotiations.

In pretending to weigh the representation of Yorkshire against the great seal, he only resolved to retain the former because he was not pressed to take the latter; and employed the menace of a reform in the House of Commons, to stimulate the premier to call him out of it. His irresistible energy in exposing the last ministry, in parliament, at public meetings, and through the press, had, combined with events, been

one of the chief causes of their overthrow; and it was concluded that no other ministry could withstand his opposition. The alleged defects of his character, as regarded judgment, steadiness, or profound knowledge of his profession, were properly appreciated by everybody: but the energy and capacity of his mind were traced in such a wide range of action;—he had done so much in diffusing education, encouraging science, pressing legal reform, and defending the rights and liberties of his fellow-citizens;—his name was so often seen in connection with literature, politics, forensic and parliamentary eloquence;—he was so universally feared or admired for the withering power of his sarcasm, and the overwhelming force of his declamation;—and by all these means he had acquired so great a popularity, that no set of ministers, coming in on popular principles, could dispense with his aid or encounter his hostility. As soon as he was offered and had accepted the seals, the cabinet was formed.

Lord Brougham did not escape from merited reproach. Mr. Croker severely exposed his vacillation and ambition in the House of Commons; and one of his colleagues in the representation of Yorkshire,

Mr. Duncombe—said: “As a Yorkshireman, I must express the regret I feel at the noble and learned lord having seceded from the honour which he has described in one of his speeches in Yorkshire, as a pinnacle which was much too high for him to look down from. I believe that the same regret is felt throughout Yorkshire. The people of Yorkshire had entertained the most sanguine hopes of the success of their distinguished member’s exertions in the cause of reform; but when the projected reform is brought forward, I fear that those hopes will be sadly disappointed. This, however, would not have been the case, if the noble and learned lord had remained in this House; and I must

say, that I deeply lament the time and the circumstances in which that distinguished person allowed himself to be seduced from the commanding eminence which he occupied in this House. This is the place in which his transcendent abilities were wanted. The noble and learned lord, when a member of this House, has often told us of another place from which we have little to expect, and yet he is gone to that place never more to return. I believe from my heart, that the noble and learned lord will perform the duties of lord-chancellor with credit to himself, and with the highest satisfaction to the country. The change, however, has been too hurried. If Lord Brougham had remained here—the member for Yorkshire—until he had fulfilled his pledges and redeemed his promises, by carrying through the House his important motions respecting negro-slavery, and reform in parliament—if he had done this, he might have retired to the place he now occupies; and if he had so retired, his appointment would have been hailed with the acclamations of his friends, while his elevation would have added new lustre to the high office of lord-chancellor, for he would have carried with him the gratitude and the respect of millions.”

This was no splenetic effusion of party animosity; most thinking men were displeased at seeing the most important judicial functions of the empire entrusted to a man whose legal attainments were as limited as his political services had been great, and whose mental habits, by their very activity, prevented the exercise of that calm reflection essential to the perfection of the judicial character. Lord Lyndhurst would probably have remained in office, had he been invited; Brougham, as Attorney-General, would probably have added to his forensic reputation in the courts, and would have held undisputed sway in the Commons. When he received the chancellorship and the peerage, “he

touched the highest point of all his greatness," and had henceforth to attract by whimsicalities and eccentricities the attention which had previously been cheerfully accorded to his intellectual pre-eminence.

Some objection was less reasonably made to the appointment of Lord Plunkett to the chancellorship of Ireland, in the room of Sir Anthony Hart, whose sapience and impartiality had won universal respect. But it was wise to pay a compliment to the people of Ireland by giving the Irish chancellorship to the most eminent of Irish lawyers; and Plunkett's conduct on the bench more than justified the wisdom and foresight which dictated his elevation.

On the 22nd of November, Earl Grey expounded the principles by which his ministerial policy would be guided. A more memorable and important speech was never made in the House of Lords. It won confidence abroad, and it restored tranquillity at home. It is too important to the history of the Times of Sir Robert Peel, and to that gentleman's career in opposition, to be omitted. Amid profound silence the noble earl rose, and said :—

" My Lords,—I have heard with much satisfaction what has just been said by my noble friend ; and, my lords, I feel inclined to take the occasion of what has fallen from him, to state very shortly, which I hope will not be unbecoming in me, the principles upon which I, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, have accepted the high office to which, in the most kind and gracious manner, he has been pleased to call me, and in which my best services are due. My lords, on the very important subject to which the petition refers, it cannot be necessary for me to say much ; my opinions on this subject have long been made known to your lordships, and have been explained both to your lordships and the country on more than one occasion. It is not long since I felt called on, indeed, again to explain them at

some length to your lordships in the debate which took place on the first day of this session. I then stated, and I now repeat my conviction, that it is necessary that the government, (by whom alone the question can be satisfactorily taken up and settled,) should take into immediate consideration the state of the representation with a view to the correction of those defects which have been occasioned in it by the operation of time, and with a view to the re-establishment of that confidence upon the part of the people which I am afraid parliament does not at present enjoy, to the full extent that is essential for the welfare and safety of the country, and the preservation of the government. I said too, my lords, at the same time, and I now repeat it, that I will not support any of those fanciful and extensive plans which are supported by persons out of doors, and which would lead not to reform, but to confusion. I do not support—I never have supported, universal suffrage and annual parliaments, nor any other of those very extensive changes which have been, I regret to say, too much promulgated in this country, and promulgated by gentlemen from whom better things might have been expected.

“I wish to stand upon the true principles of the constitution; but some reform being necessary—the principle on which I wish to regulate it, and I am sure your lordships cannot fail to see, that to fix that principle is a task of no slight difficulty—the principle, my lords, which I should lay down to regulate reform, will be to do as much as may be necessary to secure to the people their due influence in the great council in which they are more particularly represented, and by that means to restore satisfaction and confidence in the decision of the legislature, without which the government cannot proceed in comfort and safety. Reform to this extent, my lords—and if it be not carried to this extent, it will be inefficient—I wish to see effected,

but with due and fitting regard to the settled institutions of the country. The earnest desire to embark in sudden change, which must inevitably produce disturbance, I do not share—on the contrary, I reject it utterly. My lords, I do not know that it is necessary for me to say any more on the subject. These observations are undoubtedly of a very general nature, but it is obviously impossible for me now to lay before your lordships the details of any plan. Suffice it, therefore, for me to say in general terms, that I acknowledge the necessity of a reform in the representation, and that it is my anxious wish to regulate that reform in such a manner as to restore confidence and satisfaction upon the part of the people without interfering with anything that exists in conformity to the established principles of the constitution.

“I am not disposed to meddle with the settled institutions of the country, and I am altogether averse to those fanciful alterations which, if they could be carried into effect, would produce no result excepting that of occasioning a lamentable collision between the several orders of the state, the firm union and mutual interests of which will ever be my object to maintain. So much, my lords, with regard to this subject, on which it will be only necessary for me to add, that before I endeavoured to unite all those whom I considered most likely to advance the interests of the country, to myself, in his Majesty’s councils, I had his most gracious sanction to be allowed, at a proper period, to submit a measure of this nature and with this object for the approval of his Majesty, who has authorized me to declare, at a proper period, that to the principle of such a measure he is not opposed; but I am sure your lordships will at once understand, that notwithstanding the most extensive industry upon our part, the question is one not lightly to be taken up, being, as it is, one requiring much

time and consideration. Besides, my lords, the load of official business to which we shall be subjected, must be such that I cannot be expected, at this moment, to have any specific motion to submit, or to be able to submit a complete plan on so complicated a subject at a few short hours notice. My lords, there are one or two other subjects on which I conceive it will be becoming in me to say a few words. We have succeeded to the administration of affairs in a season of unparalleled difficulty. All I can say is, that to the subject of the motion for Monday next, to which I am first naturally attracted by the observations of the noble baron, all I can say is, that I look to it with the utmost anxiety, from the reference it bears to the labouring classes and the whole situation of the country. It is only within the last three hours that my colleagues and I have been installed in our respective offices as members of his Majesty's government, and we have had no access to official documents, and have received no information respecting the measures which have been pursued by our predecessors. Under these circumstances, I can only promise that the state of the country shall be made the object of our immediate, our diligent and unceasing attention—of our first and most anxious attention; for there is nothing, my lords, which so imperatively calls for the most unceasing and diligent attention on the part of the government, as the present state of the labouring classes in several of the agricultural districts. I have therefore, my lords, summoned a council for this evening, to consider what may be done with greatest speed and effect. To relieve the distress which now so unhappily exists in different parts of the country, will be the first and most anxious object of our deliberations; but I here declare for myself, (and in doing so I also speak for my colleagues,) I declare that it is my determined resolution, wherever outrages are perpetrated, or excesses

committed, to suppress them with severity and vigour. Severity is in the first instance the only remedy which can be applied to such disorders with success; and which can guard against the future recurrence of them. Although we are most anxious to relieve the distress of the people who are suffering, let them therefore be well assured they shall find no want of firm resolution on our part to repress criminal designs, and to punish the guilty. I am desirous then, my lords, that the people—though God forbid I should bring so groundless a charge against the people of England, or attribute to them feelings and conduct in which alone a small portion of the people in some of the districts indulge—I am desirous, my lords, that that portion of the people should be told that the effects of their proceedings is this—that while they complain of want of employment, they destroy the very means by which they will be benefited; and I am desirous that they should learn that the government, although it commiserates their situation, is firmly resolved not to connive at their excesses. So far, my lords, respecting our pressing domestic concerns; but there is another subject closely, I might say, intimately connected with the distress of the people, to which I will advert.

“My lords, to reduce all unnecessary expense is the firm resolution of myself and my colleagues, maintaining, however, all that is positively required for the support and service of the government, while we cut off with an unsparing hand all that is not demanded for the interests, the honour, and the welfare of the country. We have, since our appointment to office, already resolved to cut off some places about which there has been a discussion elsewhere; but do not suppose, that we take credit to ourselves for effecting so trifling a reduction, or that we limit our views to such insignificant reduction. No, my lords; every part of the government is open to consideration and revision, and I can assure your

lordships, that future reductions shall be made with unflinching severity, and with all the care and diligence which we can apply to the subject. Connected with the question of economy and retrenchment, is doubtless that of maintaining the public credit ; and on this I will merely observe, that it is at once our interest and our most sacred duty, and it shall be our object, to support public credit by all means in our power. The only other point which it remains for me to touch upon, and on which it may be satisfactory to your lordships to receive some explanation, is our relations with Foreign Powers, and the line of policy which the present administration means to pursue. On this, as on the other branches into which I have divided my statement, I must say, that hitherto we have had no means of knowing what has been done upon this subject by our predecessors. But, my lords, I now repeat in office what I before stated as my opinion out of office, that the first object, interest, and duty of the British government, ought to be to maintain peace by all means consistent with the honour of the country. Our true policy is to maintain universal peace, and therefore non-interference is the principle, the great principle, which ought to be, and will be, heartily adopted by the present administration. I cannot say more, not knowing what has been the course pursued by my predecessors ; but in looking to the means by which peace may be preserved, we must also look to the maintenance of our connection with the powers with whom we are in alliance.

“ It must be the care of the new government, as I have no doubt it was of the old, to maintain a proper connection with our allies, for the purpose of amicably settling all questions which may be likely to disturb the repose of Europe. Some solicitude may be felt in consequence of the events lately passed in France, but with that country I trust we shall be able to hold the most friendly relations. Between these two

great and powerful nations, standing on the same principles of public liberty, and influenced by the same high and honourable motives, and by the same desire to promote each its own prosperity and happiness, I trust the union arising from community of sentiment and feeling will be the closest and the most enduring. Their common interest will, I hope, teach them to seek and promote each the welfare and the happiness of the other, and cautiously to avoid all views of aggrandizement and ambition, which might endanger the stability of both empires, and disturb the peace of the civilized world. These, my lords, are the views of his Majesty's government. To sum up in a few words the principles on which I stand, they will, I trust, be found to be these—amelioration of abuses—promotion of the most rigid economy—and every endeavour to preserve peace consistently with the honour of the country. Under these principles, I have undertaken a task, to which I have not the affectation or presumption to state that I am equal. I am arrived at a time of life, my lords, when retirement and repose are more to be desired than that active and anxious exertion to which I shall be subjected in the high office to which my gracious sovereign has been pleased to call me. And I can assure your lordships, that I should not have engaged in this arduous task, had I not found, and I may be permitted to say thus much without incurring the charge of vanity or arrogance, as it arises from no merits of my own, but rather to accidental circumstances—had I not found that if I did not submit to the will of the sovereign, such an administration as I could support, and as I thought necessary to the country in its present circumstances, could not be formed. My lords, I remembered my age and my limited capabilities, but I was aware that if I declined the task which had been allotted to me, there was reason to fear the attempt to form a new administration might have failed altogether.

Urged therefore, my lords, by considerations of public duty, to attempt that to which I am not equal, the government of the country at this momentous crisis, my only trust is in the support of this House, and of the public; and above all, in the gracious kindness and confidence of his Majesty, which alone can safely carry me through the difficulties with which I am surrounded. With this support I am ready to attempt all things for the service of the country—looking always to the principles on which I have demanded this support, and claiming now that indulgence which may be well and justly accorded to an administration formed under such circumstances, and so recently completed. If hereafter it shall be found that I cannot execute what I have undertaken—if I cannot conduct the public affairs in a manner satisfactory to those from whom I claim support—if it be proved that I am unable to bear the load I have essayed to carry, I shall be willing and ready to resign into his Majesty's hands, that power which he has so graciously, so kindly, and so confidently submitted to me, in a manner which displayed at once his love for his country, his earnest desire to promote its prosperity, and his great condescension towards myself. It is not necessary for me to say more than to express my gratitude at the confidence of his most gracious Majesty, which alone enabled me to form an administration so rapidly, and under such peculiar circumstances; for it is only this day week, that I was listening on the other side of the House to the speech of the noble and learned lord lately on the woolsack; and little did I then suppose that such an event would come to pass, and it is only by the gracious confidence of the sovereign, that I have been in this short space of time enabled to assemble around me, with no view to parliamentary influence, with no other view than that of their competency to fill their situations, the friends with whom I act. My lords, my present task is done—the administration stands before

you and the public. You know the persons who compose it, you have heard the principles on which it professes to act; and for the maintenance of them we throw ourselves upon the confidence and support of our sovereign, your lordships, and the country."

The announcement of principles so opposite to those hitherto acted upon, produced the happiest effect on the temper of the nation. Satisfaction and confidence everywhere succeeded to discontent, suspicion, and alarm. It was generally believed that the Duke of Wellington was about to retire altogether from public life, and that Sir Róbert Peel, thus finally and fortunately emancipated from the trammels of party, would take his proper place as an active member of a liberal administration. But if he had done so, he must have indefinitely adjourned his long-cherished hope of becoming the head of a cabinet of his own formation, and this was a sacrifice which he was not at all disposed to make.

Among the objections made to the new ministry, one of the most important was, that it included too large a proportion of titled persons, and had too aristocratic a complexion. In fact it was more exclusively filled with members of noble houses, than any ministry which had been formed in England for a long series of years. It was also said, with some show of reason, that the premier had reserved too large a share of official power and emoluments for the members of his own family and relatives. But a more serious objection to the majority of the new cabinet was their want of official experience, and their consequent deficiency in that aptitude which Englishmen seek in those whom they describe as "men of business;" Lord Brougham himself was conscious that his appointment had not given satisfaction, and he took advantage of the presentation of a petition in favour of Parliamentary Reform, by the Earl of Grosvenor, to

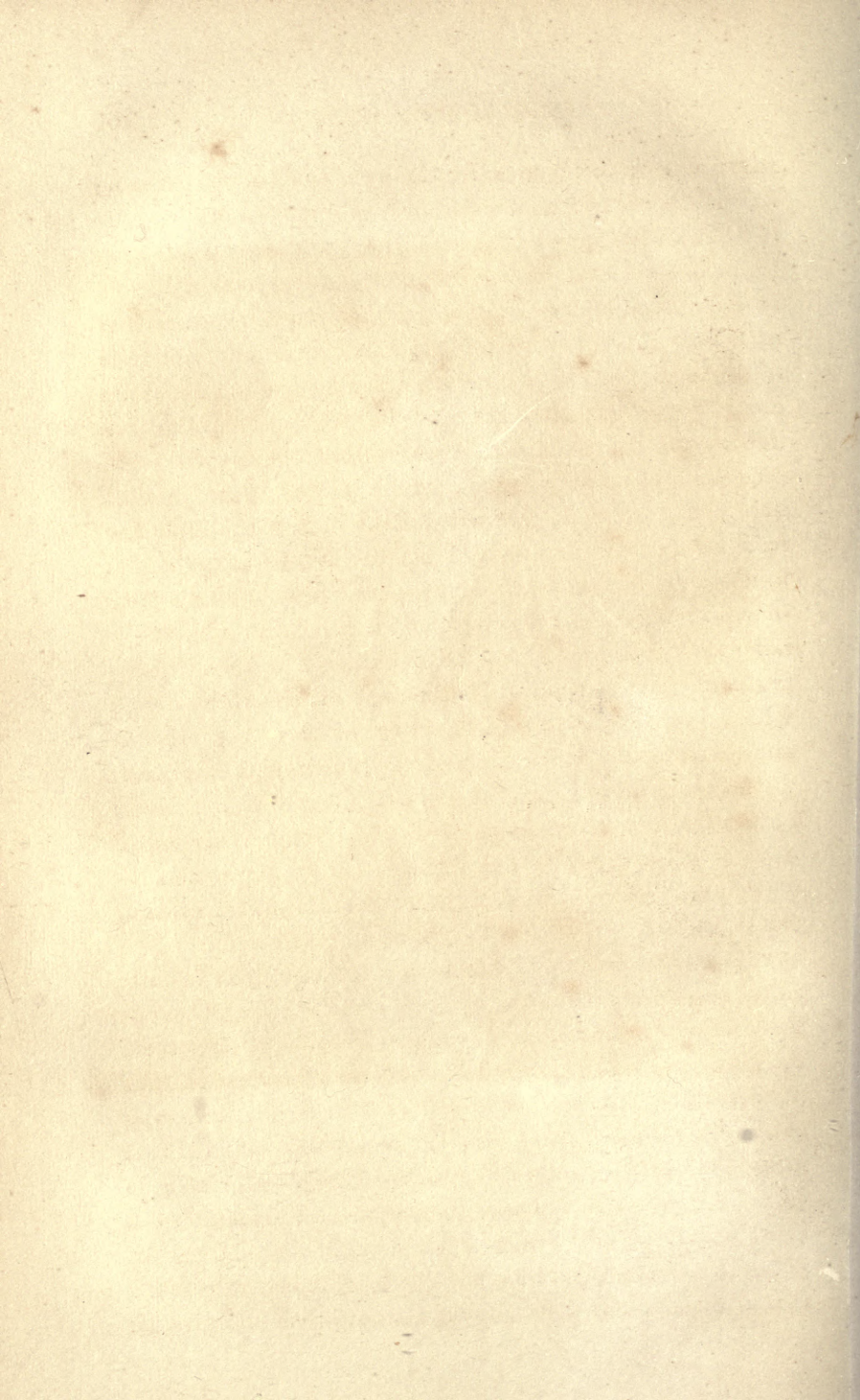


Painted by Sir Tho^s Lawrence, P.R.A.

Engraved by H. Robinson.

THE RT HON^{BLE} HENRY BROUGHAM, BARON BROUGHAM & VAUX.

Brougham



make a powerful speech in his own vindication. Having noticed the attack, we must in justice insert the defence :

“ My lords,” he said, “ I have listened with great attention to the few observations which have been made by my noble friend, upon these two questions, that must be considered of paramount importance, whether we regard the interests of the empire or the public duties of statesmen to the entire world. I am obliged to my noble friend for the opportunity he has afforded me ; but as many other opportunities will occur, and at no very distant period of time, it prevents the necessity of my declaring my opinions at present. That my opinions are well known to my noble friend on the topics to which he alludes, may be true—that they may be known to other noble lords, in common with the great mass of my fellow-citizens, is probable, and I hope is not for my disadvantage. That any noble lord should know so little of me I hope is not the case, as for a moment to suppose, that in any circumstances in which I can be placed upon this earth, my opinions, my feelings, my principles, my wishes in favour of both these great questions, always of extreme, and now of urgent importance to this empire—could suffer change, or that anything could even induce me to abate one iota of the zeal which swells my bosom in these matters.

“ At least I trust there can be but few who know so little of me, even from report, as to suspect me of such a change ; it is painful to me, and the more so from the unexpected appeal of my noble friend, that now, when for the first time I have the honour of addressing your lordships, excepting in your judicial capacity, I should be called upon to speak of a subject in every way of such inferior importance as myself. Nevertheless, misrepresentations have gone abroad, and remarks of an unfriendly nature, touching the consistency of my public conduct, have been made elsewhere ; and therefore, as my noble friend said, he was anxious to give me

an opportunity of setting right the one, and repelling the other; and should I now shrink—or rather let me say, should I decline offering a few words in deference to your lordships, and I may add out of respect to myself, after the call which has been made on me, it might wear the appearance of shrinking, not from the expression of my opinions—not from a readiness to correct misrepresentation, but from the attacks which have been made on me, if indeed the observations to which my noble friend alludes, were intended as attacks. It will be sufficient; however, to say very briefly, that I bear, and shall bear with perfect equality of mind, everything that may be said of me in any quarter whatsoever—that I am not at all surprised—but the contrary—that a person respectable for his knowledge and talent—nay, even distinguished for the exercise of that knowledge and talent—has been led into errors of me from ignorance of my character; and that I bear with an equal mind, what has been said by that individual under the influence of mistake. I am not astonished at the observations which have been made by persons in another place, for they cannot be more astonished (and as a matter of astonishment, I understand the observations to which I allude were introduced, and I do not say they were intended as an attack)—they cannot feel greater astonishment than I myself do at my consenting to my elevation to the distinguished place which I now hold in his Majesty's councils. My lords, I am not surprised at their astonishment, and only say, that I share it with them; for they cannot be more stricken with wonder than I am, that, at this late period—at this eleventh hour, that I should have overcome my repugnance to resign my high station as representative for Yorkshire, than I was myself when I did overcome that repugnance; that I who up to that time when I was reported to have stated my intention of not severing myself from the representation of Yorkshire; which intention

by-the-by I never did state; but when I am said to have made that statement, I no more contemplated the possibility of my being prevailed upon to quit the station I then held for that I now occupy, than I at the present moment fancy I shall ever go back to that House from which the favour of his Majesty has raised me.

“I need not add, that in changing my station in parliament, the principles which have ever guided me, remain unchanged. When I accepted the high office to which I have been called, I did so in the full and perfect conviction that, far from disabling me to discharge my duty towards my country—far from rendering my services less efficient, it would but enlarge the sphere of my utility.

“The thing which dazzled me most in the prospect which opened to my view, was not the gew-gaw splendour of the place, but because it seemed to afford me, if I were honest—on which I could rely; if I were consistent—which I knew to be a matter of absolute necessity in my nature; if I were as able as I was honest and consistent—a field of more extended exertion. That by which the great seal dazzled my eyes, and induced me to quit a station which till this time I deemed the most proud which an Englishman could enjoy, was, that it seemed to hold out to me the gratifying prospect that in serving the king, I should be better able to serve my country.”

From this time the parliamentary debates became languid: all parties seemed disposed to give the new cabinet credit for their good intentions, and waited with impatience, but without distrust, for the development of their plans. The old cabinet seemed to have fallen into utter oblivion; no one blamed and no one praised them; but the enthusiasm with which promises of retrenchment were received from the new administration, seemed no very indirect censure on the

extravagance of their predecessors, and against this inference Sir Robert Peel protested in the following terms :—

“ The late government has been denounced as a government indifferent to the wants and feelings of the people, and indisposed to the rigid economy which the necessities of the times required. In fact, however, it had done a great deal towards relieving the burthens of the people. But I will ask the right honourable gentlemen opposite, whether, short as is their experience in office, that experience does not convince them that there exist many more difficulties between them and their wishes on the score of retrenchment and economy, than they were at all prepared to expect? whether, in fact, it is not a very different thing out of office to recommend certain popular measures, and carry them into effect when in office?”

After a very clever vindication of the course of policy pursued by the Wellington administration, Sir Robert Peel, who seems to have put forward his brother-in-law, Mr. Dawson, to feel the pulse of the House, entered at great length into an examination of the points on which he differed from the new ministry; but he so dealt with them as to lead to the inference that there was no discrepancy of sufficient magnitude to prevent him from becoming a member of the new government. Such a deduction from his statements was greatly strengthened by the conclusion of his speech, in which he said :—

“ Having said so much with respect to the points on which I cannot concur with the present government, I am happy to be able to express my full concurrence with them in one matter of great importance—I am pleased, much pleased with the declarations they have made, that they would support at all hazards the legislative Union of England and Ireland. I suggest to the right honourable baronet,

and to the other advisers of the crown, whether, if those who agitate this question, but are determined not to bring it forward, since they avoid discussion for the purpose of continuing agitation—I suggest, I say, to the present ministers, whether it would not be better to place on record the opinion of the House—to move a resolution declaratory of the opinion of the legislature? Those who think that the Union ought to be dissolved, ought to submit the question not to popular agitation in Ireland, but to the deliberation and sanction of those branches of the legislature, which are, and ought to be, the sole tribunals for deciding it. I hope that the young members of this House, the gentlemen who, as Catholic members, now for the first time sit amongst us, will show that whatever distinctions may have once existed, whatever matters may have once created division, will show that the most heartfelt cordiality unites them in preserving this important Union. I would gladly sacrifice the office and power I once enjoyed, if the present ministry, more than the last, can secure the declaration of parliament, that England and Ireland shall share their fortunes in peace, and, if war is unavoidable, that they will fight united together, and by their Union attain that triumphant success which they could not hope to enjoy if divided. I hope too, that out of doors the people will not be misled by the declamation of affected patriots. I hope that before the inhabitants of Dublin can be induced to follow the example of Belgium and Paris, they will well consider whether they have the same justifiable cause of opposition to the government; and even when they have settled that point, I trust that they will well consider what is the present condition of those countries in which revolutions have taken place, and compare them with the state in which they were before revolutions begun.

“In saying this, it is not necessary to call in question

the justice of the resistance offered by these people to their late governments; it is not necessary for me, (and indeed no circumstance could induce me to do it,) to palliate the conduct of those governments; but although the resistance was justifiable, I have a right to inquire whether revolution is not a great evil; and when I look to the condition of France and of Paris, and particularly to the condition of the working classes, I cannot help thinking I am justified even in believing, that though resistance may be justifiable, it involves those who engage in it in almost irremediable ruin. I call on the House to compare the state of the public funds in France with their state before the revolution. The resistance was right, it has been successful; the most popular men are in office; yet how is it that property is deemed insecure; that employment is almost at an end; that industry is paralyzed; that strangers are withdrawing from the country, and that the condition of the lower classes is infinitely worse than it was before the revolution? If it is so, as I believe it is, then I assert it to be true, that great changes in any government cannot take place without exciting alarm and despondency, and without materially and injuriously influencing property in the country where the revolution takes place. I call on the House, I call on all persons of property, to be fully aware of the mistake they would commit in dividing this country and Ireland, and to be aware of the irreparable evils that must result to both from such a measure.

“ All persons of property are interested in this question, and on them I call for a calm, considerate, and full attention to this subject. In what, I say, I have not any intention to stop the course of fair economy, but it is impossible to read the public press of this country, and to see its appeals to the passions of the people, without knowing that while economy is put forward as the avowed subject, the covert



Painted by H. Hamilton.

Engraved by J. Jenkins.

WILLIAM CONYNGHAM PLUNKET, D. C. L. BARON PLUNKET.

Plunket.

design is to degrade and lower all the constituted authorities of the country, and to secure for public writers that power and authority which would be denied them under all other circumstances. To gain this end, they are willing to create tumult and confusion, and to subject this country to the worst and most degrading of tyrannies—the tyranny of an ungovernable mob.”

The attacks made on the appointment of Lord Plunkett roused Mr. Leader, the member for Kilkenny, and he pronounced a brilliant eulogium on a statesman who had been so long Peel’s great antagonist on the Catholic question. He spoke as follows:—

“ Sir, the honourable member for Middlesex has made so long a digression from the subject immediately before the House, that I almost regret that my connection with Ireland makes it a kind of personal duty in me to make a few observations in reply to the right honourable baronet who addressed the House, and with so much ability, on the subject of the recent law-appointments in Ireland. I admit, that I have felt deeply on these appointments. I hope I entertain the opinions which an independent, considerate, and fair man ought to feel on such an occasion. All those who have addressed the House on the subject of these appointments, have confined their observations to the personal claims and merit of Lord Plunkett. Sir, with the greatest deference, there is a person left out of the consideration of the question, whose station, whose feelings, and whose responsibility, ought not in times of such immense public difficulty to be treated lightly, or inconsiderately overlooked—sir, I mean the First Lord of the Treasury, and Prime Minister, Earl Grey. Sir, when that distinguished nobleman and statesman was called on to form an administration, what was the state of public affairs? Will any man say that the foreign and domestic concerns of the

country were ever in so critical or so embarrassing a situation? Was not the continent of Europe exposed to a political earthquake and a moral convulsion which bore no similitude or resemblance to anything that had happened at any former period? Will any gentlemen deny that the state of this great metropolis had assumed an unusually agitated and almost insurrectionary appearance? Can any man deny that the surrounding counties were not one scene of connected and apparently organized rustic combination, in which there was no respect for property, and probably as little even for life? With regard to Ireland, can the greatest enemies to the administration have the courage to rise in their places, and assert that the aspect of affairs in that country was not such as to make it absolutely imperative on any minister to feel an intense interest in adopting any practical measure, and make such arrangements as were likely to be conducive to its future prosperity and peace? If this be no exaggerated picture of your affairs at home and abroad, was it surprising in Lord Grey to repose his confidence in, and divide his responsibility as far as Ireland was concerned, with my Lord Plunkett? Sir, that nobleman is not a stranger to either House of Parliament—he is, on the contrary, well known to both. Sir, I claim for Lord Grey, in the appointment of Lord Plunkett, the benefit of the eulogy which the right honourable baronet, the late Secretary of the Home Department, has pronounced on his late colleague and friend. I do not look to Lord Plunkett, whose talents have been so justly eulogized, so much as I look to Lord Grey, who has a heavy weight of responsibility impending over himself. Would any man assert, that even in last summer the north of Ireland did not exhibit a theatre of frightful party and political dissensions principally arising out of religious prejudices and aversions? And was it not at least desirable

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to give the Catholic Relief Bill a fair trial, and impose on the principal promoter of that important and healing measure—a man admirably conversant with the artful and selfish policy of its opponents—the power by high official situation of contributing to its final and complete success? Called on as Lord Grey was, under the circumstances I have described, was he to be condemned for addressing himself to Lord Plunkett, and saying—‘Sir, you have been the great advocate and champion of the removal of civil disabilities for religion in Ireland, and your country, so far from being tranquillized by your measures, appears to be now exposed to increased agitation and excitement. Under such circumstances, your counsel and assistance are essential to the measures of my government, and I repose in your judgment and qualifications one of the highest offices of the state, in the hope that you may assist the king’s government, and share the heavy responsibility imposed on myself.’ Under these circumstances, in my honest judgment, I must say, that Lord Grey exercised a sound discretion—discharged, to the best of his opinion, a solemn duty—and that it is utterly impossible for any person disposed to make fair allowance for a public man, not to concur immediately in the justice of the conclusion, that no fair blame, but, on the contrary, just praise is due to Lord Grey for a sound exercise of deliberate reflection in the appointment of Lord Plunkett.”

Sir Robert Peel was now about to occupy a new situation, that of leader of the opposition to the most popular administration which had been formed in England for more than a century, and he had to take his stand in resistance to a measure—Parliamentary Reform—which was borne onward by a swelling tide of enthusiasm, which a statesman of his experience could not but foresee must soon be irresistible. At the same time, he may very reasonably have calculated

on the re-action which the disappointment of the exaggerated expectations of the results to be derived from a liberal government was sure to produce. During the reform crisis it was the misfortune of the Whigs to be too popular. There was no man in the empire who had a political crotchet in his head, that did not expect to see it realized by a Whig ministry and a reformed parliament; and when he subsequently found that his pet project was as much scouted under the new system as under the old, he avenged his mortification on those who, in his view, had lured him into the folly of false hopes. Earl Grey foresaw this result from the beginning; with prophetic foresight he predicted that the authors of the Reform Bill would at no very distant time be punished for the disappointment of expectations undesignedly raised, and the dispersion of visions which they had never evoked. There was a warning before him in Belgium; the national congress convoked by the provisional government, showed a marked hostility to the authors of the revolution which had called it into existence; and M. de Potter, the chief agent of that revolution, who had been carried to the Hôtel de Ville on the shoulders of the multitude, in returning from exile, was, after the lapse of two brief months, obliged to exile himself, from a fear of assassination by popular commotion.

Whether Sir Robert Peel calculated on this re-action has been doubted; it is, however, more certain, that he believed a European war inevitable, and that the inexperience of the Whigs at such a crisis would lead to such confusion, that he and Wellington would be called back to power by the nation. It has been his besetting sin through a great part of his career, to aim at rendering himself a kind of political necessity, sometimes to his party, and sometimes to the people. He has forgotten that a necessity exists only in a crisis, and is set aside when the necessity has

passed away. He was a necessity to the anti-Catholic party until 1829, and then a necessity to the liberals until emancipation had passed; he was a necessity to the protectionists up to 1846, and then a necessity to the free-traders until the corn-laws were repealed; but people are not very grateful to necessities, and so 1831 and 1847 dawned on him out of office.

There was, however, much in the aspect of affairs at the close of 1830, to justify Peel's hesitation and circumspection in deciding on the course of policy which it would be most prudent to adopt. The condition of the country in that year has been thus cleverly portrayed by a lamented writer, who died before he came to his fame:

"The curtain of the year 1830 dropped on Europe in a state of ferment and agitation, of which it was impossible to check the progress or to foretel the result. The masses of the population had been stirred up from the bottom by the concussion of the French and Belgic revolutions, and could not be expected for a long time to subside into order, or resume a determinate arrangement according to their weight and affinities. The partition-wall of privilege, rank, or subordination, interposed between different classes of the European community, had in some cases been forcibly broken down, and in others had been more silently undermined. Antiquity, custom, usage, or legitimacy, which formerly became a shelter to abuses, could not now protect justice and right from threatened innovation. Everywhere power was challenged on its rounds, and compelled to give the popular watchword before it could be allowed to pass. Whether it was a nation that demanded its independence from a foreign power, as in Belgium and Poland; or a people that cashiered their dynasty, as in France and Saxony; or a parliament that changed its administration for a more popular party, as in England; or republics that liberalized

their institutions, as in Switzerland,—all was movement and change. The breath of revolution sometimes blew from the suburbs of a capital, as in France; sometimes from the cottages of the peasant, as in the Swiss mountains; but it was everywhere powerful. No institution was held venerable, no authority sacred, that stood in the way of the popular will. The people had everywhere got a purchase against their rulers, and had fixed their engines for a further pull. The power of domestic military protection had diminished, in proportion as rulers required its aid; while, at the same time, all Europe seemed arming for a general trial of strength, or a recommencement of conquest. Every kind of reform was the order of the day; financial reform, legal reform, ecclesiastical reform, and parliamentary reform.”

It appeared very doubtful that such important and perplexing questions should all be brought to a peaceful issue; and in the event of war, it was still more doubtful whether national animosities would not have done more to set England and France on opposite sides, than a common love of liberty could have effected in bringing them into close alliance. Belgian independence would not have been settled without a European war, had not Russia found occupation at home by the insurrection of Poland,—had not Austria been compelled to direct all its vigilance to its possessions in Italy,—and had not Prussia a very reasonable alarm for the security of its Rhenish provinces. The liberal cause was one of great doubt and of apparent danger; under such circumstances, we can hardly be surprised that it was not embraced by a statesman of Sir Robert Peel’s characteristic caution, however much we may lament that he lost a glorious opportunity.

It has been said that overtures for a coalition with Peel would have been scornfully rejected by the aristocratic Whigs, for that they were unconscious of the want of

administrative talent in the cabinet which they had constructed. The experiment was not tried; and it is hard to believe that such a statesman as Earl Grey would not gladly have exchanged the Poco-curante Lord Melbourne for such an intelligent, active, and practised Home Secretary as Sir Robert Peel. At the same time, there is no doubt that the predominance of the aristocratic element in Lord Grey's cabinet, must have deterred Peel from making advances which he had every reason to expect would be received with coldness. There is much of the Saxon stubbornness of manufacturing Lancashire in the right honourable baronet's composition; he would not know how to cringe, even if he wished to set about it, and homage to title, merely as title, he has never paid. The question that presented itself to his mind, was, "If I offer myself to the Whigs, shall I occupy the position, and receive the estimation, which I know that I merit?" This question, unfortunately for all parties, he was forced to answer in the negative, and thenceforth his part was taken.

He did not inquire whether there was not a third course open; whether, by a frank and manly advocacy of liberal principles as an independent member, he would not have occupied such a position in the estimation of his countrymen, as would have rendered it impossible for a liberal government to dispense with his assistance.

It has also been said that Peel could not or would not sever the ties by which he was bound to the Duke of Wellington. It is far more likely that in the then probable event of war, he calculated largely on the strength to be derived from his close political alliance with the greatest of living military chiefs. War came not, and so his calculations were baffled. But we are strongly persuaded that the Wellington alliance has been to Sir Robert Peel the source

of injury and weakness, not of service and strength ; it has fettered all his movements in and out of office, and has prevented his gathering around him the natural allies of a statesman whose innate tendencies are towards the safe and progressive amelioration of the condition of humanity.

CHAPTER VII.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

So early as the reign of Elizabeth, notice was taken of the inequalities in the representation of England, arising from the decay of population in some places, and its rapid increase in others. A remedy for such anomalies, however, was not seriously contemplated, until the time of the Long Parliament, when that with many other useful schemes was baffled by the usurpation of Cromwell. From the Restoration to the Revolution, the parliament so accurately represented prevailing opinion, that there was no desire to render its constitution more popular; the utmost which the patriots of the period sought, was to have a session every year, and to limit the duration of parliament to three years. In the reigns of William and Anne, the great struggle against France so engrossed public attention, that there was no thought taken of domestic institutions, and it was not until after the accession of George I., that any suspicion was entertained of a difference between the opinion of parliament, and the opinion of the country. The Jacobites believed, and probably with some reason, that the House of Stuart, an ancient and national dynasty, was more acceptable to the majority of the higher and the lower classes of Britain, than the House of Hanover, imported merely to soothe the exaggerated fears of ultra-Protestantism in the middle classes. Hence the Tories of that day were most ardent reformers, while the Whigs increased the oligarchical tendencies of the constitution by passing the Septennial act.

Jacobitism gradually died out; the strife of parties continued to interest place-holders and place-hunters, while the public at large took little interest in the contest. But a change took place soon after the accession of George III., which brought the House of Commons into direct collision with the great majority of the nation, and thus glaringly exposed the startling fact that it did not fairly represent the people.

A more worthless demagogue than Wilkes never became the favourite of a deluded people. But a prosecution, in which the personal spleen of the monarch was too openly displayed, invested him with such spurious popularity, that he was elected member for Middlesex. The House of Commons refused to admit a member whom it had expelled a short time before, and the election was declared void. Wilkes was again elected without opposition, and again refused admittance. A third time he was returned by a triumphant majority, but the House of Commons declared that his opponent, Colonel Luttrell ought to be the sitting member. This was regarded not merely as unconstitutional, but by many as a total subversion of the constitution. It was absolutely made the subject of a trial in a court of law, whether taxes could be levied legally under the authority of a parliament which had thus violated the conditions of its constitutional existence.

This contest soon brought on a second, of greater, though less apparent, importance. The House of Commons had long insisted on the privilege of keeping its debates and its proceedings under the shadow of concealment; but the proprietors of the public journals found, in the interest which the people took in the discussions on the Middlesex election, a sufficient pecuniary incentive to dare the prohibitions and the privileges of the Commons. The House in 1771, ordered a printer to be arrested by their sergeant-at-

arms; the printer denied the legality of the arrest, sent for a constable, and gave the sergeant-at-arms into custody. All the parties were brought before the city magistrates, who were Crosby the Lord Mayor, and Aldermen Wilkes and Oliver. They liberated the printer, and compelled the sergeant-at-arms to give bail on an action of false imprisonment. The House was in a fury, and no one was more vehement in defending its privileges than Charles James Fox: in the course of a most intemperate speech, he declared "I am for sending these magistrates to the Tower: I stand up for the constitution, not for the people; if the people attempt to invade the constitution, they are enemies to the nation."

Crosby and Oliver, both members of the House, were committed to the Tower; but Wilkes refused to attend, unless permitted to take his seat for Middlesex. The House repeated its summonses in vain, and at length ingloriously yielded, by summoning him for a particular day, and then adjourning over the time appointed. From that hour the public practically secured the right of having the debates regularly reported and published. To the honour of Fox it must be added, that no one at a later period more strenuously advocated that right than he by whom it had been at first so fiercely opposed.

The American war of independence raised the momentous questions of taxation and representation. In America it raised the colonies into independent states; in England, irritated by disaster, sensitive to the pressure of increased taxation, and commercially distressed by a war against its best customers, it produced that demand for a change in the representative system, which, after the struggle of half a century, ended in the Reform Bill. The great county of York led the way. On the 8th of January, 1780, Sir George Saville presented its petition for economic and



representative reform, which had been adopted at the largest meeting of freeholders ever assembled in the county.

In 1781, the Duke of Richmond, anticipating the Chartists of the present day, proposed to divide the country into five hundred electoral districts, each with an equal population, returning one member; to make elections annual; and to make the suffrage universal. It was of course rejected. The great Earl of Chatham vaguely proposed to add a hundred members to the House of Commons; the plan was more fully developed by his son William Pitt, who entered parliament in 1780 as an ardent reformer, and repeatedly endeavoured to obtain the consent of the legislature to the changes he projected. His last effort was in 1785, after he had become prime minister; he then proposed to disfranchise thirty-six decayed boroughs, each returning two members, and to give seventy-two additional members to the counties and the metropolis. On this occasion, however, he courted defeat; for he knew that George III. was as firmly opposed to Parliamentary Reform, as to Catholic Emancipation. From this time Pitt not only abandoned his advocacy of reform, but became one of the most vehement of its opponents.

The question thus deserted, was taken up in 1787 by Mr. (afterwards Earl) Grey, who never relinquished it until in his old age he conducted it to a triumphant issue. The greatest of his early efforts were made in 1793 and in 1797, but the alarm excited by the French revolution, produced such a disinclination to change, that in a very full house he could only procure the support of ninety-one members. Sharing in the hopelessness of Fox, Mr. Grey and some of his friends for a time seceded from parliament; and the name of reform was scarcely mentioned, until the collapse of commerce and credit in the years which succeeded the peace of 1815. In these years, the violence and folly

of the radical leaders disgusted the enlightened advocates of moderate reform, and it was not until 1822, that Lord John Russell brought on the first regular and remarkable debate on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, which had been entertained in the House of Commons for more than a quarter of a century. In preceding chapters we have stated the growing opinion in favour of Reform from the time of Canning's death,—obvious to every man in the empire except the Duke of Wellington—up to the period when Earl Grey, as prime minister, declared that it should be brought forward as a cabinet measure.

Brief as was the interval between the Christmas holidays and the beginning of February, when parliament was to re-assemble, the whole nation had become organized in favour of reform during the period. Meetings were held, attended by vast multitudes in all the large towns: petitions were adopted unanimously, and more than one significant hint was given of the peril attending a refusal. During this crisis, Sir Robert Peel did nothing but watch the course of events; that a time had arrived when something should be done, he could not avoid perceiving, and he must have been aware that his best and wisest course would have been to concert with his friends a rival scheme, to be produced in opposition to that about to be propounded by the Grey administration. Time for the purpose was afforded him, for though Earl Grey announced on the 3rd of February, 1831, that his plans were matured, it was not until the 1st of March, that the scheme was introduced by Lord John Russell in the House of Commons.

This delay was occasioned by angry discussions on the state of Ireland, which O'Connell's agitation and its usual concomitant, agrarian outrage, had brought to a state of anarchy which seemed to menace a social and sanguinary revolution. He formed association after association, to agitate

the repeal of the Union, but the lord-lieutenant, the Marquis of Anglesey, disregarded the thin pretexts of change of name, and put each down by proclamation. The bluster and folly of O'Connell and his brother agitators, none of whom held an influential, and few a respectable, position in the country, might have been disregarded, but for their ruinous effects on the deluded people.

One of the most wicked of his proceedings was, to cause a run on the banks, which, though very partial, induced them to restrict their discounts; and this suspension of commercial credit, produced an instant stagnation of trade, and a rapid decline in the value of all articles of consumption, including provisions and agricultural produce, on which Ireland is so very dependent. At length he and several of his partisans were arrested, and held to bail for having conspired to evade the proclamations issued according to the statute. A true bill was found by the grand jury; after vainly attempting delay by a demurrer, which he did not even venture to argue, O'Connell pleaded guilty to fourteen counts of the indictment; and through his son proposed a compromise with the government on condition of the prosecution being abandoned. Mr. (since Lord) Stanley, stated these facts in parliament, and, amid the inextinguishable laughter of the House, Mr. O'Connell attempted to explain them away with a total absence of shame, which but for its notoriety, would have been incredible. He did not deny that he had authorized his son to offer in his name that he would cease to agitate for the repeal of the Union, if government would abandon the prosecution, and inform him what measures they intended for the benefit of Ireland. And yet, in the very face of this letter, he denied that there had been any offer of compromise! Subsequently, Mr. O'Connell gave all his powers to aid ministers in the contest on the Reform Bill; in the excitement produced by the discussion



Painted by Sir Tho^s. Lawrence.

Engraved by S. Freeman.

HENRY WILLIAM PAGET, MARQUESS OF ANGLESEY, K.G. &c. &c. &c.

Anglesey

of matters of greater interest, the trial and compromise were forgotten. The act under which he was tried, was allowed to expire, and he was never called up for judgment.

In the interval between the re-assembling of parliament and the introduction of the Reform Bill, ministers suffered more than one mortifying defeat on the scheme of financial policy proposed by Lord Althorp, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was obvious to all disinterested spectators, that many of the ultra-Tories, who had combined to eject the Peel and Wellington administration, were already sorry to find that their conduct had resulted in the formation of a Whig ministry; and it was equally obvious that on any vote of confidence which would involve a test of the strength of parties, the new cabinet would be left in a more decided minority than that which caused the resignation of the old. Their only chance of safety was the popularity which they might win by the Reform Bill; that measure was not only the chief feature of their policy, but the sole tenure of their power.

On the 1st of March, Lord John Russell, to whom, although not a cabinet minister, the task of developing the ministerial plan had been entrusted, brought forward the measure in a speech of great length and unrivalled ability. He stated that the reasonable complaints of the people had been directed against nomination of members by individuals—elections of members by close corporations—expenses of elections—non-representation of important places. These he proposed to remedy by a system of disfranchisement and enfranchisement. All boroughs in which, by the census of 1821, there were less than 2,000 inhabitants, of which there were sixty—were to be totally disfranchised: boroughs containing less than 4,000 inhabitants, of which there were forty-seven—were to return one member, instead of two; and Weymouth, which had previously returned four members, was to be reduced

to two. Having thus deprived the House of Commons of 168 members, his lordship proceeded to supply their places by the work of enfranchisement, which included giving members to places hitherto unrepresented, and giving more members to other places which had always enjoyed them. Seven large towns and four metropolitan districts were to have two members each; twenty other towns, one member each; twenty-seven of the largest counties were to be divided, and each division to return two members. Yorkshire, which already possessed four members, was to have one additional for each of its ridings. Five new members were to be added for Scotland, one for Wales, and three for Ireland.

In all boroughs, the elective franchise was to be extended to all persons paying a rent of £10 per annum, whether they occupied the premises or not. Existing resident electors were not to be deprived of their rights during their life-time, but no non-resident elector was to be allowed to retain his franchise. Copyholders, whose property was of the value of £10 yearly, and all householders to an equal amount, were to vote for counties. All electors were to be registered, and the duration of the poll was to be reduced to two days for boroughs, and four for counties. It is not necessary to enter into further details, as the scheme subsequently underwent some very important modifications. "The purpose of the measure," said Lord John Russell, at the conclusion of his eloquent address, "is timely and effective Reform, and by such a course to give permanency to that constitution, which has been so long the admiration of nations, on account of its being popular in its spirit; but which cannot exist much longer, unless strengthened by an infusion of popular spirit, commensurate with the progress of knowledge and the increased intelligence of the age. To establish the constitution on a firm basis, you must show that you are deter-

mined not to be the representatives of a small class, or a particular interest; but to form a body who, representing the people, springing from the people, and sympathizing with the people, can fairly call on the people to support the future burdens of the country, and to struggle with the future difficulties which it may have to encounter; confident that those who call upon them are ready to join them heart and hand, and are only looking, like themselves, to the glory and welfare of England."

The motion thus introduced, gave rise to a debate protracted over seven nights, during which, between seventy and eighty members delivered their opinion, and contributed three hundred columns of type to the pages of Hansard. Sir Robert Harry Inglis led the opposition to the measure, on the ground that no charge had been proved against the House of Commons as then constituted, and that there never was a time when the influence of the crown, the aristocracy, or corruption by money, was less than the present. Mr. Twiss sneered at the middle class proposed to be enfranchised. Lord Althorp (afterwards Earl Spencer), defended their enfranchisement. Lord Francis L. Gower (since Earl of Ellesmere), appealed to the authority of the many eminent statesmen who had opposed reform, and thus ended night the first of the debate.

On the second night, Mr. Hume advocated the measure, which he declared went far beyond his expectations. Mr. J. V. Shelley, as representative of Gatton, defended rotten boroughs. Mr. Baring Wall advocated moderate reform, but reprobated the ministerial measure. Lord Newark declared the measure necessary to restore confidence between representatives and their constituents. Lord Darlington denounced the bill as destructive of the fair rights of the aristocracy. Lord Ebrington insisted that without Reform, the confidence of the people would be withdrawn from the House of Commons.

Lord Stormont declared that the ministers were about to create more anomalies, than they proposed to cure. Sir John Walsh deprecated concession to popular clamour. Mr. Macaulay, in a speech of unrivalled brilliancy, declared that the time had arrived when Reform must be conceded. "Now," said he, "while everything abroad and at home forebodes ruin to those who persist in a hopeless struggle against the spirit of the age,—now, while the crash of the proudest throne of the continent is still ringing in our ears,—now, while the roof of a British palace affords an ignominious shelter to the exiled heir of forty kings,—now, while we see on every side ancient institutions subverted, and great societies dissolved,—now, while the heart of England is still sound,—now, while the old feelings and old associations retain a power and a charm which may too soon pass away,—now, in this your accepted time,—now, in this your day of salvation,—take counsel, not of prejudice—not of party spirit—not of the ignominious pride of a fatal consistency—but of history—of reason—of the ages which are past—of the signs of this most portentous time—pronounce, in a manner worthy of the expectation with which this great debate has been anticipated, and of the long remembrance which it will leave behind. Renew the youth of the state. Save property, divided against itself. Save the multitude, endangered by their own ungovernable passions. Save the aristocracy, endangered by its own unpopular power. Save the greatest, and fairest, and most highly civilized community that ever existed, from calamities which may in a few days sweep away all the rich heritage of so many ages of wisdom and glory. The danger is terrible—the time is short. If this bill should be rejected, I pray to God that none of those who concur in rejecting it, may ever remember their votes with unavailing regret, amidst the wreck of laws, the confusion of ranks, the spoliation of property, and the dissolution

of social order." Lord Mahon replied, that the public feeling in favour of the measure was "only temporary, founded on misrepresentation, falsehood, and delusion." Mr. Henry Hunt, while apparently advocating Reform, exerted himself to damage the cause to the utmost, by declaring that the proposed bill was unsatisfactory to the masses of the population. Lord Morpeth vindicated the ministerial measure. Sir Charles Wetherell assailed it in a most furious speech, denouncing it as "the Russell purge of parliament." The attorney-general, (since Lord Denman) vindicated the measure from the charge of being revolutionary. So closed the second stage of the debate.

On the third night, Mr. Bankes denounced the reformers for having made an unconstitutional use of the name of the sovereign. Mr. Hobhouse declared that by the bill, "the elective franchise would be thrown into the hands of those who had the greatest hold upon the higher classes, and the most influence over the lower; thus constituting as good and as proper a basis of representation as could be proposed." Mr. Hart Davis declared that the subject ought not to have been agitated in such excited times. Mr. Baring spoke on both sides of the question, but on the whole opposed the motion. The Marquis of Tavistock stated, that the Bedford family had no wish to retain borough influence. Lord Palmerston, on whom attention was fixed as the representative of the Canning party, eloquently vindicated the consistency of himself and his friends in supporting a measure to which their late leader had been opposed, quoting Canning's aphorism, "That those who resist improvements because they are innovations, may be at last compelled to accept innovations, when they cease to be improvements." There were then loud calls for Sir Robert Peel, who rose with some real or affected reluctance, and commenced his speech by thus frankly accepting Lord Palmerston's justification.

“I have been placed in the same situation with my noble friend. I too have found it necessary, from a regard to the interests of the country, to adopt a different course from that which I had long conscientiously followed; and I ought therefore to be the last man in this House who would refuse to put an indulgent construction on the language, or to join in harsh conclusions with respect to the motives, of public men. I never can allow it to be supposed that public men have not higher and nobler motives* for their public conduct than the paltry desire to retain place; and the character of my noble friend, therefore, even if he had been silent, would have proved to me a sufficient guarantee for the rectitude of his intentions. Having thus imitated that generous courtesy which prevails in more deadly combats than that in which I am about to engage, having as it were shaken hands with my noble friend, and disclaimed all personal hostility, I trust I shall now be excused if I descend into the arena, and with perfect freedom apply myself to the speech of my noble friend.

“At the moment when we were anxiously waiting for a vindication of the measure before the House—at the moment when we wanted to know, not what popular opinion demanded from us, but what we were practically to gain from the adoption of the measure of the noble lord—at that moment the noble lord had thought fit to enter into an invidious comparison of the merits of the late and the present administrations, and the greater part of his speech was composed—not of the arguments which the House so greatly desiderated, but of sarcastic allusions to the conduct and opinions of the late administration, connected with an attempt—not a very successful one, I admit—to magnify the deeds of the present government at the expense of that government which was lately honoured with his Majesty’s confidence. My noble friend says, that if there had not been

a change in the government, the same results, in respect to the restoration of the public peace, and especially in Ireland, would not have taken place. In that opinion I am much disposed to concur. No party hostility shall ever prevent me from doing justice, whenever justice should be done, or bestowing praise wherever praise ought to be bestowed. I approve the course pursued by the present Home Department; I admire the conduct of the noble marquis now at the head of the Irish government; ever since he has reassumed that office, I have seen nothing in his conduct but what entitles him to praise. I believe that there is some truth in what has been said by my noble friend, that had the late administration been in office, they would not have been able to effect what has been effected by the present administration. But should we have had the same assistance? Should we, at a period of great excitement, if amid a loud and general demand for retrenchment, we had produced estimates of increased extent—should we have found all party considerations yield to a feeling for the public service? or had we resorted to measures of extreme coercion, should we have found a united and generous disposition in all parts of the House to support the executive government, and supply it with the means of defeating whatever efforts might be made to disturb the public tranquillity? Sir, I will not enter into any comparison of the merits of the two administrations. But let my noble friend recollect that the instrument which the noble marquis at the head of the Irish government has wielded, with his characteristic vigour and success, was an instrument placed in his hands by his Majesty's late government; fabricated by their foresight, contrary to the opinion and contrary to the wishes of many of the members of the present administration. If we found it difficult to preserve peace in some districts of England, for want of a local and constitutional force, let it be remembered that it was not

by the late government that the reduction of the yeomanry was effected."

In reference to the great argument of the reformers, that some reform was necessary, and that those who opposed the ministerial measure were bound to propound another, he remarked,

"I am told that the alternative before me is the adoption of that bill, or civil commotion. I am to be deterred from forming a deliberate judgment on a most important public question by the prophetic visions of massacre and confiscation. Such were the words used last night by the honourable member for Calne.

"Let me ask the friends of the bill, why I am to allow myself to be scared by this intimation? Why may I not form the same deliberate judgment on this bill, which you, who have introduced it, formed on the bill which was introduced last year by a noble lord (Lord Blandford)? By your opposition to that bill, you did not imply that you were opposed to all reform; but merely implied that you objected to that bill. It is the same with me in this case. Again, on the same principle on which you, who support the bill, reject the application of the people for vote by ballot, why am not I at liberty to reject the bill?

"Why am I to yield to popular clamour and violence, when the noble lord opposite has not yielded to them when they demanded the Repeal of the Union? We were told last night that if we rejected this proposition, we, the individual members who so rejected it, would be held responsible for the consequences.

"'We will shift from our own shoulders,' say his Majesty's ministers, for even at this early period they foresee danger, 'the responsibility of having provoked it. We have proved our incapacity to govern, but we will show you our capacity to destroy, and hold you responsible if you obstruct us.' Oh no,

sir! On their heads shall be the responsibility of this mad proceeding. I for one utterly disclaim it. For what am I responsible? Was it I who raised the stormy waves of the multitude? Was it I who manifested my patriotism by exerting all my powers to excite the people to discontent with the existing constitution?

“Did I taunt the people with their indifference to reform, with having closed their ears to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely? with having lived in the lazy enjoyment of practical good, and disregarded the promises of visionary improvement? Was it I who called for the Pension List of the Privy Council, for the express purpose of holding up the members of that council to public indignation? Did I draw invidious comparisons between a great naval commander and the civilians who presided over the department of the admiralty?

“Did I ever doom to public obloquy that hapless first lord who should be so grasping of emolument as to include in his own estimates £5,000 per annum for his own salary? Did I, at a moment when the events of Paris and Brussels had caused great public excitement, when various causes were conspiring to agitate the public mind, did I express my misplaced admiration of the conduct of assembled thousands who were supposed to have flaunted in the face of their king the emblem of a foreign revolution? Sir, if there be men who having thus excited the passions of the people, and spurred their lazy indifference, bring forward the question of reform at a time when all prudential considerations, whether with reference to foreign or to domestic topics, ought to have forbidden such a step—if, I say, disappointment should follow their rash undertaking, I will never, while I have a voice in this House, allow them to hold me or any other individual member of the House responsible for the consequences of their infatuation. I am told that an appeal will be made to

the people. I beg not to be included among those who are charged with making any one observation disparaging to the middle classes of society in this country. I repudiate such sentiment—sprung as I am from those classes, and proud of my connection with them. So far am I from underrating their intelligence or influence, that I tell you this—you who talk of appealing to the people—that unless these middle classes shall show more prudence, more judgment, and more moderation than their rulers, I shall despair of the destinies of my country.”

In conclusion, he said,

“ We are arrived at 1831, and reform is again proposed, whilst the events of the last year in Paris and Brussels are bewildering the judgment of many, and provoking a restless inquiet disposition unfit for the calm consideration of such a question. I, too, refer to the condition of France, and I hold up the late revolution in France, not as an example, but as a warning to this country. Granted that the resistance to authority was just, but look at the effects—on the national prosperity, on industry, on individual happiness—even of just resistance.

“ Let us never be tempted to resign the well-tempered freedom which we enjoy, in the ridiculous pursuit of the wild liberty which France has established.

“ What avails that liberty, which has neither justice nor wisdom for its companions—which neither brings peace nor prosperity in its train? It was the duty of the king’s government to abstain from agitating this question at such a period as the present—to abstain from the excitement throughout this land of that conflict—(God grant it may be only a moral conflict)—which must arise between the possessors of existing privileges, and those to whom they are to be transferred. It is the duty of the government to calm, not to stimulate, the fever of popular excitement. They have

adopted a different course—they have sent through the land the firebrand of agitation, and no one can now recall it.

“Let us hope that these are limits to their powers of mischief. They have, like the giant enemy of the Philistines, lighted three hundred brands, and scattered through the country discord and dismay; but God forbid that they should, like him, have the power to concentrate in death all the energies that belong to life, and to signalize their own destruction by bowing to the earth the pillars of that sacred edifice which contains within its walls, according even to their own admission, ‘the noblest society of freemen in the world.’”

The debate on the fourth day was opened by Mr. Gisborne, who insisted that important classes were left unrepresented, and that therefore reform was necessary to secure even a virtual representation. Mr. Freshfield denounced the ministerial measure as deficient in practical wisdom. Mr. W. Duncombe considered disfranchisement, except in the case of proved guilt, essentially unjust. Mr. John Smith said that the details of the proposed measure had so delighted him, that when he first heard them they took away his breath. Mr. Calcraft denounced the measure as unjust. Mr. (since Lord) Stanley replied to Sir Robert Peel’s speech of the preceding evening, declaring that ‘ministers had come into office pledged to economy, reduction, and reform, all of which pledges they had redeemed.’ Lord Seymour accused the ministers of a depraved desire to court popularity. Mr. C. Wynn regretted that it was a measure he could not support. Mr. (since Lord) Jeffrey, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, whose literary fame, as editor of the Edinburgh Review, gave great interest to his maiden address—made a brilliant speech in support of the measure. He was answered by Mr. Croker, who, as a large contributor to the Quarterly Review, might be deemed both a literary

and political rival of Lord Jeffreys. After this tilting match between the champions of the two great reviews, the debate was adjourned.

After some preliminary skirmishing, Col. Sibthorp opened the debate on the fifth day, by insisting that longer time should be allowed for deliberate inquiry and calm examination. Mr. Tennyson insisted that sufficient information was already before the House. Sir George Clerk averred that the intelligent part of the people of Scotland did not want reform. Mr. Anderson Pelham supported the bill, and Mr. J. T. Hope opposed, the only thing worthy of remark being that both represented rotten boroughs. Lord Dudley Stuart deemed reform necessary, not merely to the perfection, but to the security, of our institutions. Col. Tyrrell thought that the proposed reform would be the ruin of the country. Mr. Sykes and Mr. Long Wellesley declared that Col. Tyrrell did not speak the opinions of his constituents in Essex. Sir George Warrender said that those who had votes in Scotland were opposed to the measure. Lord Howick declared that the cry for reform was produced by the misgovernment of the last century, and that the people would not be satisfied without it. Mr. W. Peel protested that the measure was intolerably unjust. Mr. John Russell defended its impartiality. Sir John Johnstone admired the principle of the bill. Mr. North assailed it in a speech of great pretension and little power. Mr. R. Grant answered him with declamation equally florid, but hardly more argumentative; and then the fifth night of the debate ended.

Considerable interest was felt on the sixth night. It had been currently reported that Mr. O'Connell had become reconciled to the Whigs, that he was disposed to abandon his insane project for the Repeal of the Union, and to advocate the ministerial measure with all his energies. He declared that it was "a measure which deserved support, because it

was a large, a liberal, and a wise measure—he would even call it a generous measure, and felt sure that it would be an effectual measure of reform.” Mr. Attwood taunted the ministers for having united with so new and extraordinary an ally. Sir James Graham elaborately vindicated the cabinet. Mr. Lefroy, amid great impatience, opposed the measure, as did Sir Joseph Yorke, in a string of naval metaphors, the strangeness of which greatly amused the House. Mr. Bethell supported, and Mr. Praed opposed the motion, and the debate was then for the last time adjourned.

The debate of the seventh night was opened by Mr. Percival, who delivered a sermon, rather than a speech, against the measure. Mr. D. W. Harvey supported it “as a revolutionary measure, necessary to bring back the British Constitution to its original design.” Mr. Goulburn opposed the abolition of close boroughs, because “it might lead to the possible exclusion of the ministers of the crown from parliament.” Mr. Lennard praised it “as a spontaneous act of bounty on the part of the government.” Mr. C. Douglas declared that it violated the principles of the constitution. Mr. Alderman Waithman said that the measure was heartily approved by the British people. Mr. Lyon opposed; Messrs. Schonswar and Bayntun supported the motion; Mr. Courtenay (since Earl of Devon) condemned the measure as unfair. Lord Stanley maintained its equity. Mr. T. Duncombe said that the opposition made to the bill by the representatives of rotten boroughs would accelerate its success. Mr. Tennant said a few words in support of the measure. Lord John Russell replied, and the motion for leave to bring in the bill, was carried without a division.

Great surprise was naturally felt at such an unexpected result of a protracted debate; had a division been taken, as Mr. Croker recommended, the opponents of the bill would

have had a majority, and ministers must have resigned. But this was a contingency for which Sir Robert Peel was not prepared; the breach which Catholic Emancipation had made in his party was not yet healed; the opposition did not form a combined body, from which a strong government might be formed; they had no regular plan of party operations, and were guided by no leader. The counsel of Sir Robert Peel therefore prevailed; he recommended that a division should be delayed until the second reading, that stage at which, according to the forms of the House, the principle of a bill is decided.

The policy of his advice may be questioned. From the time that the details of the measure were made known by the publication of Lord John Russell's speech, the popular enthusiasm in favour of reform gained every day in strength and intensity. Public meetings were held, to vote thanks to the ministers; petitions signed by tens of thousands were presented in favour of their measure; those who opposed it were menaced, those who doubted were scorned, and those who hesitated were swept onwards in spite of themselves, by the strength of the popular current. The press, and more especially that powerful organ of public opinion, the *Times*, strenuously supported the government, and stigmatized, sometimes with more vehemence than was necessary, the opponents of reform. Brief as was the interval between the debate on the introduction of the bill and its second reading, the determination of the vast majority of the nation to obtain the promised reform, was so great and so manifest, that many of its opponents became convinced that parliament had no alternative between the adoption of the measure and a revolution. Mr. Calcraft avowed and acted on this opinion; though he had opposed the introduction of the bill, he voted for its second reading.

Sir Richard Vivyan opened the debate by moving the

virtual rejection of the bill. He was answered by Mr. Sheil in one of the most brilliant pieces of rhetoric ever heard in the House of Commons, and which by its splendour threw the rest of the debate into shade. The discussion was languidly protracted for two nights, and then the principle of Reform triumphed, but only by a majority of ONE. The majority amounted to 302, the minority to 301.

If the Tory party could have been re-organized, and Peel, fully restored to confidence, placed at its head, it is possible that a more moderate project of reform might have been proposed with reasonable chances of success. Of English members, a majority of three voted against the measure; of Scotch members, a majority of thirteen; and the victory was won by the Irish members, who contributed a majority of seventeen in its favour. O'Connell had given great and just offence by his intemperate abuse of the English people, "the Saxons," in his wild crusade for the repeal of the Union; and Sir Charles Wetherell gave utterance to a very general feeling, when he described the annual tribute levied for the great agitator on the people of Ireland as systematic mendicancy. It is true that O'Connell had sacrificed a lucrative profession to devote himself to the service of his country, and that he deserved a remuneration for his labours and his losses; but it is not to be denied that the form which that remuneration assumed, was one revolting to generous feeling and delicate sentiment. This was a contingency of which the Tory party might have availed themselves, if united, with great effect. Sir Robert Peel pointed out to them the way to victory in the discussion on the Irish Reform Bill which was introduced to the House under the auspices of Mr. (since Lord) Stanley. O'Connell made some very reasonable objections to the details of the measure, but in a most friendly tone; Mr. N. P. Leader, the member for Kilkenny, also complained of other defects, and this gave

Sir Robert Peel an opportunity for denying that the ministerial measure received unanimous support. In reply to the lord-advocate (Jeffrey) and Mr. Sheil, he said—

“The learned lord says that on a former night I argued unjustly in favour of the maintenance of the small boroughs, by making an unfair selection of the eminent men whom they had returned to parliament. He says, if I gave the names of the eminent men, I ought also to have given those of the useless and undistinguished members, and that the number of the latter would have greatly predominated. Of course it would; but this was not the principle of my selection. I took the names of all those persons (without the least reference in the first instance to the place by which they were returned) who had been the most eminent in the annals of parliament. One omission I made, and I rejoice in the opportunity of repairing it—I omitted the name of Mr. Ricardo—a name for which I have true respect. I took twenty men, the most celebrated of the times in which they lived, and I inquired by what means they came into parliament. Surely if I found that sixteen or seventeen were returned for the small boroughs, and not more than three or four for the populous districts, it was fair to argue that the total extinction of the small boroughs would probably exclude great talents that would otherwise gain admission to the House. But said the honourable gentleman, the member for Milborne Port, many of the eminent men returned for small boroughs, were advocates for Parliamentary Reform, and were among the most enlightened friends of popular rights. So much the better for my argument.

“If the members for the decayed boroughs had been infected by a narrow corporation spirit—if they had indeed been *curvæ in terris animæ ac cælestium inanes*—then you would have justly demanded the abolition of the system

which sent them here ; but if you have found among them men of expansive minds, who justly claimed for themselves the privilege of representing, not the decayed borough that sent them here, but the universal people—then I contend, they reflect a lustre on the humble origin from which they derived the opportunity of personal distinction, and the means of public service. Sir, I have referred to the member for Milborne Port (Mr. Sheil);—I heard his speech with great satisfaction. I was consoled by the reflection, that I had contributed, by that measure which cost me so much uneasiness, to wean great talents, great powers of eloquence, from popular agitation, and find for them a fitter and worthier occasion for their display. I thought, too, I saw an argument in favour of that system which the honourable gentleman was condemning—when I recollected, that although the popular constituency of an Irish county had rejected the honourable gentleman—the avenue of a decayed borough had been opened to him, and that Milborne Port had bestowed the distinction which the county of Louth had refused. I asked myself by what means—when we have made by this bill the mere local interests predominate in every town and district in England—when we shall have established not one, but 200 Bassetlaws—by what means will the honourable gentleman effect his future return to parliament? Must he, sir, hereafter have to stoop to agitation, to conciliate the favour of an Irish constituency? or, disdaining to do it, must he retire discomfited before either the purse of a richer, or the exciting violence of a less scrupulous, rival? One word more to the honourable gentleman. When he stood on this floor discussing the interests of the mightiest empire in the world, when he was heard with mute attention, or cheered by the animating voice of this assembly—did he feel it no advantage—no distinction to Ireland—that an Imperial Parliament was open to her distinguished sons? Never,

never, if I were he, would I consent to relinquish that privilege for my country—never would I consent to banish such talents and acquirements as his, from the councils of a great empire; and send them back to the narrow arena of a local parliament in Dame Street—to the discussion of Dublin police and Dublin paving boards—and all the comparatively petty subjects of mere Irish legislation.”

He then entered at great length into an elaborate review of the condition of Ireland; his tone towards that country was most conciliatory, and tended rather to show that the ministerial measure would not promote the peace and prosperity of Ireland, than to insinuate any doubt of the unfitness of Irishmen for legislative power, whether in the character of electors or representatives. In his effective conclusion, he said—

“ Sir, there is no part of the whole measure of reform, which is pregnant with consequences so important as this remodelling of the constituency and representation of Ireland. I fear the result—and above all—I deprecate the time at which the experiment is made. Two years only have elapsed since that great change in the internal policy of Ireland was effected; and before there is any sufficient experience of its practical operation, we are called upon to make another change, that puts to imminent hazard the securities we provided against the danger of the first. It is now beyond the control of parliament to remedy the evils which are in my opinion inseparable from the course which the king’s government has pursued. In the completion of their measures, I see the utmost danger, and who is there can look with satisfaction on the consequences of that rejection? Who does not see, that the moment the king’s ministers have, with the king’s sanction, denounced the constitution of this branch of the legislature—have proclaimed the necessity of an effectual change—have invited great masses

of the people to a share in the privileges and authority of government; who does not see, that whatever be the abstract merits of the question of reform, the practical position of that question is materially altered? Still, sir, I must compare the consequences of passing this measure of reform, with the consequences of rejecting. It is with this measure as a whole, with which we have to deal—which we must accept or reject—but which we are not, it seems, at liberty, in any material respect, to modify.

“ If that be the alternative, I must reject it; for, with my opinion as to the ultimate effects, in this country and in Ireland, of the measures now under our consideration—I should, in the words of Mr. Fox, be ‘a traitor to my king, to my country, and to my own conscience, if I did not prefer the constitution to popular favour,’—and if I did not protect the rights and interests of the people when they are threatened by their own delusion and excitement.”

Had the councils of the Tories been guided by wisdom or reason, they would have gone in a body to Sir Robert Peel, and supplicated him to place himself at their head; under his guidance a definite plan might have been framed for the modification of the bill in committee, which, even if unsuccessful, would have gone to the country as a rival scheme of reform, and would have saved the party from the imputation of being mere obstructives. The want of such a plan was felt more sensibly in the following year, when the king endeavoured to entrust the settlement of the reform question to Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington.

Instead of this course of proceeding, the Tory party, when the bill went into committee, set forth General Gascoyne and Mr. Sadler as their leaders. The general had no parliamentary reputation, and that of Mr. Sadler had been for some time on the wane, but because they had been opponents of Catholic Emancipation, they were thrust into a position which

could only be sustained by great tact and recognized influence. When Lord John Russell had stated the changes which ministers proposed to introduce in committee, General Gascoyne moved, as an amendment, "that it is the opinion of this House that the total number of knights, citizens, and burgesses, returned to parliament for that part of the United Kingdom called England and Wales, ought not to be diminished." The debate was chiefly remarkable for the speech of Mr. Hawkins, who, like "Single-speech Hamilton" of a former generation, electrified the House by an address of brilliant eloquence, and never afterwards approached the same excellence. His concluding sentence produced a thrilling effect on the House: "For the honour of this ancient monarchy, whose perils and whose triumphs for so many generations are chronicled in the proceedings of this House; for the sake of this faithful people, who have stood by us in the hour of our trial, and borne with us in the hour of our pride,—let us seize the opportunity which now presents itself to inscribe ourselves on the page of history as the first recorded example of *power correcting its own usurpations*." It was with painful surprise that the liberal party saw Sir Robert Wilson range himself among the opponents of the measure. When he had been ungraciously deprived of his commission for reproving the violence of the military at the funeral of Queen Caroline, a large and generous subscription was raised, to compensate him for the loss; and the popular borough of Southwark elected him as its representative. His desertion of the cause of reform was reprobated with bitter severity by Mr. Stanley, who in a few short years more glaringly adopted the very same course. An angry interchange of Irish vituperation between Mr. North and Mr. O'Connell, in which the latter decidedly won the palm, gave fresh animation to the debate just as it began to become languid. Sir Robert Peel advocated General Gascoyne's

amendment in a very conciliatory speech, and moderate almost to tameness, chiefly insisting that ministers ought to be held responsible for any consequences which might arise from the rejection of a measure which they had introduced without a due consideration of its importance. It was obvious that he did not approve the step which his party had taken, though he felt himself bound to support it. General Gascoyne's amendment was carried by a majority of eight; the numbers being—for it, 299; against it, 291: the bill was therefore virtually lost.

This division took place on the 19th of April; it decisively proved that the ministerial measure could not be carried in the existing parliament, and that the ministers must choose between a resignation and a dissolution. It was not long doubtful which alternative would be chosen. On the 20th, Mr. Hume declared that a prompt dissolution was the only remedy for the inconvenience produced by the even balance of parties, and on the following day it was generally known that the king and his ministers had resolved to appeal to the country. In allusion to these rumours, Lord Wharncliffe, on the evening of the 21st, inquired whether ministers had advised his Majesty to dissolve parliament; and when Earl Grey refused to answer, he gave notice that on the next day he would move an address remonstrating against such a measure. This brought matters to a crisis; to avoid an inconvenient discussion, it was resolved that parliament should be dissolved before Lord Wharncliffe's motion could be brought forward.

When the House of Commons met on the 22nd, it presented a scene of confusion and disorder, such as had not been since Cromwell dissolved the Long Parliament. The appearance of the Speaker in his full official robes was a proof that the rumours of a dissolution were well founded; and

these rumours had caused the House to be crowded at the early hour of two o'clock. Sir R. Vyvyan took advantage of the presentation of a petition to make a furious attack on the cabinet; he was called to order by Sir Francis Burdett, but the Speaker decided in favour of Sir R. Vyvyan, while Mr. Tennyson impugned the decision of the Speaker. After a riotous scene of cheering and counter-cheering, mingled with cries of *order* and *chair*, Sir R. Vyvyan was allowed to resume his address, but he had not proceeded far when the report of the first gun announcing the approach of the king resounded through the House. Some one shouted out "A cheer for the gun!" to which the reform party heartily responded. Amid the cheers, laughter, and cries of "order," which followed each successive discharge, it was impossible that a word could be heard; and having vainly attempted to stem the torrent, Sir R. Vyvyan sat down. Sir Robert Peel, Lord Althorp, and Sir Francis Burdett rose at the same instant. Peel was received with loud shouts, groans, and laughter, from the ministerial benches; responded to by cries of "order" from the opposition. All the efforts of his friends, aided on his part by the most vehement action and gesticulation, failed to obtain a hearing; and when the Speaker decided in his favour, Lord Althorp moved that Sir Francis Burdett should be first heard. The Speaker then said, that Sir R. Peel having first caught his eye, had an undoubted right to speak on Lord Althorp's question; but when the right honourable baronet attempted to proceed, he was received with a perfect storm of derisive shouts and laughter from the ministerial benches, while the speaker, obviously under great excitement, made vigorous efforts to restore order. At length Peel was allowed to proceed: he said—

"The House has this day seen an example of a defiance of all regular authority, even from the place occupied by min-

isters of the crown. I do not complain of the dissolution of this House; I complain merely of the manner in which it was done.

“ I do not, however, share the disponding feelings of my honourable friend the member for Cornwall. I have better hopes for England. I do not advise my countrymen to sit with their hands before them, patiently expecting the confiscation of their funded property. I have a proper confidence in the good sense and intelligence, and just appreciation of the character, of the people of England, and I am satisfied that if they unite religiously in a just cause—and unite, I know, they will—there will be no fears of a successful issue to that struggle into which they are about to enter. (*Cheers, groans, and cries of “bar!” “order.”*) I ask, is it decent thus to attempt to produce confusion under the pretence of calling to order? If this is a foretaste of what is to take place hereafter, I may, indeed, call on you to beware of a reformed parliament.

“ I will tell you what you are about to establish by a reformed parliament. If the bill proposed by ministers be carried, it will introduce the very worst and vilest species of despotism—the despotism of demagogues—the despotism of journalism—that despotism which has brought neighbouring countries, once happy and flourishing, to the very brink of ruin and despair. But when I look at Ireland, when I see the state of society in the western counties of that kingdom, whence I am told that rebellion has almost hoisted its standard, and when it is known that landed proprietors well affected to the state are left without the slightest protection to their property, and compelled to move their families into the towns for the protection of their lives from the marauders, who in open day threaten them with pillage and destruction, I confess I cannot call up words to express my astonishment and regret at the course adopted by the government.

Instead of coming to parliament to ask for new powers, and new laws, to vindicate the outraged authority of government, the king's ministers, at such a crisis, and under such a state of society in Ireland, have come to a resolution to dissolve parliament, in order that they may protect themselves from that loss of power with which they are threatened.

“ If the crown is to be so easily influenced—if its independence is so far extinguished—it ceases to be an object of interest to enter into its service. I perceive, indeed, that the power of the crown has already ceased.

“ Ministers have, however, adopted this course to protect their places, and they hold them, with the established character, in the eyes of the country, of having, during the time they have been in office, exhibited more incapacity, more unfitness for the conduct of public business, than has ever been shown by any ministry that attempted to hold power in England. They have been in office for some months, and not a single measure has emanated from them from the day they took office till this moment, for the benefit of the country.

“ They have pursued the course adopted by all governments called liberal. They have tossed on the table of this House some bills—a Game bill and an Emigration bill—and after having established, with respect to them and other measures, what they call liberal principles, they abandon them to their fate.

“ What then is to be”—

In the midst of his sentence, Sir Robert Peel's voice was again drowned in deafening cries of “ order ” and “ bar: ” he remained for several minutes standing and gesticulating, but not a word that he spoke could be heard. This extraordinary scene was terminated by the appearance of the usher of the black rod, who came to the bar, and said, “ I am commanded by his Majesty to command the immediate

attendance of this honourable House in the House of Lords, to hear his Majesty's royal assent to several bills, and also his Majesty's speech for the prorogation of parliament." The Speaker immediately left the House, accompanied by an unusual crowd of members; on his return, he called the members round the chair, and having read the royal speech to them, declared with more emotion than was ever probably displayed at such a formality—that the House stood prorogued.

Even the decorous House of Lords was hardly less disorderly than the House of Commons on this remarkable day. Lord Wharncliffe introduced his motion, but had not spoken more than a dozen words when he was interrupted by the Duke of Richmond, who noticed that all the peers were not sitting in their proper places, as was usual on such occasions. The remark was aimed at the Duke of Wellington and Lord Lyndhurst; but it was resented by the Marquis of Londonderry, who rose to order, as did the Marquis of Clanricarde and Lord Lyndhurst. A scene of indescribable confusion followed; five or six peers were addressing the House together, but at length Lord Wharncliffe was allowed to conclude by moving the address of which he had given notice. Lord Chancellor Brougham, who had just come in, as Lord Wharncliffe concluded, said, with great emphasis, "I never yet heard that the crown ought not to dissolve parliament whenever it thought fit, particularly at a moment when the House of Commons had thought fit to take the extreme and unprecedented step of refusing the supplies!" Cheers and cries of various kinds followed, the confusion being increased by the booming of the guns, and the shouting of the multitude announcing the approach of the king. The Lord Chancellor left the House to receive his Majesty, upon which the Marquis of Londonderry proposed that the Earl of Shaftesbury should take his place on the woolsack. Confusion now

became worse confounded ; the Earl of Shaftesbury proceeded to the woolsack, amid a Babel of noises, shouts, groans, and even screams, which quite defy description. The peeresses who were present exhibited the greatest alarm ; peers shook their fists in each other's faces, and it seemed not unlikely that more than one personal scuffle was imminent. At last the Earl of Mansfield got the ear of the House, and was allowed, not without interruption, to proceed ; he continued to speak until the entrance of the king compelled the excited peers to assume some semblance of order. His Majesty then read the following speech with marked energy and dignity :—

“ My Lords and Gentlemen,—I have come to meet you for the purpose of proroguing this parliament, with a view to its immediate dissolution.

“ I have been induced to resort to this measure, for the purpose of ascertaining the sense of my people in the way in which it can be most constitutionally and authentically expressed, on the expediency of making such changes in the representation as circumstances may appear to require, and which, founded upon the acknowledged principles of the constitution, may tend at once uphold the just rights and prerogatives of the crown, and to give security to the liberties of the people.”

After the usual paragraphs thanking the House of Commons for the liberality of its supplies, and announcing peace with foreign powers, his Majesty continued,—

“ My Lords and Gentlemen,—In resolving to recur to the sense of my people in the present circumstances of the country, I have been influenced only by a paternal anxiety for the contentment and happiness of my subjects, to promote which, I rely, with confidence, on your continued and zealous assistance.”

The Lord Chancellor then declared parliament to be



Drawn & Engraved by H. McBrille.

WM 4th PROROGUE PARLIAMENT. APRIL, 1831.

House of Lords. Destroyed by Fire Oct. 16th 1834.



prorogued to the 10th of May. Next day appeared the proclamation announcing the dissolution, and directing a new election. The writs were made returnable on the 14th of June; and thus terminated the first act of one of the most memorable paliametary struggles to be found in the annals of England.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE AND TRIUMPH OF REFORM.

No victory was ever more enthusiastically celebrated than was the dissolution of William the Fourth's first parliament. The city of London was brilliantly and generally illuminated. In the west end of the town, the windows of several opponents of reform, particularly the Duke of Wellington and Mr. A. Baring, (since Lord Ashburton,) were broken. At the meetings to support ministers and their measures, it was resolved that at every election the cry should be, "The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill." In the midst of such excitement, it was not wonderful that the great majority of the elections terminated in the return of ministerial and reforming candidates. Many opponents of the bill, whose seats seemed placed beyond the reach of hazard, were rejected by the roused constituencies. General Gascoyne was defeated in Liverpool; Sir R. Vyvyan was expelled from Cornwall; Sir Edward Knatchbull was forced to resign the county of Kent; and Sir Robert Wilson, who had been elected as a reformer for the borough of Southwark, was unceremoniously rejected, so soon as he evinced any symptoms of doubt and hesitation. Four reformers were elected for the county of York, and as many for the city of London, by an overwhelming majority. The Duke of Newcastle's candidates were defeated in his grace's boroughs of Newark and Bassetlaw; and out of the eighty-two county members for England, there were not ten unpledged to reform. Some rioting took



Painted by Sir Tho: Lawrence, P.R.A.

Engraved by J. Cochran.

THE RT HON^{BLE} SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

James Mackintosh

place at the Scotch elections, where the franchise was so restricted as to exclude the great body of the people from any share in the representation; but, on the whole, tranquillity was wonderfully preserved during a crisis of such heated enthusiasm. The new parliament was opened by the king in person, on the 21st of June; and the consideration of the reform of the representation was the first and most prominent topic in the royal speech. The debates on the address were rather warm in the Lords, but in the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel, as leader of the opposition, assumed a temperate and moderate tone; he condemned the dissolution of parliament in the midst of a session, and he censured the arts which had been used to excite the passions of the people; but he made no personal charge against ministers, and was very gentle in his criticism on their general policy. On the 24th of June, Lord John Russell introduced his amended Reform bill; Sir Robert Peel offered no opposition to the measure in this stage, and intimated his desire that the great debate should take place on the second reading. This arrangement was unanimously adopted, and on the 4th of July the great struggle began. The debate was opened by Sir J. Walsh, who moved, that "the bill be read a second time that day six months;" an amendment which was seconded by Mr. Fynes Clinton. Sir James Mackintosh eloquently vindicated the measure. "This," said he, "is not solely a reformatory measure; it is also conciliatory. If it were exclusively proposed for the amendment of institutions, I might join in the prevalent cry that it goes too far, or, at least, travels too fast—farther and faster than the maxims of wise reformation would warrant. But as it is a means of regaining national confidence, I consider the terms of this plan as of less consequence than the temper which it breathes, and the spirit by which it is animated. A conciliatory measure deserves the name only

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when it is seen and felt, by the simplest of men, to flow from the desire and determination to conciliate. At this moment, when, amidst many causes of discord, there is a general sympathy in favour of reformation, the superior classes of society, by opening their arms to receive the people—by giving to the people a signal and conspicuous proof of confidence—by putting trust in the people, may reasonably expect to be trusted by the majority of their countrymen. But to reach this end, they must not only be, but appear to be, liberally just, and equitably generous. Confidence can be purchased by confidence alone.”—Next to him, the most remarkable speeches made on the first night of the debate, were by Lord Porchester, who declared that though he had, in earlier life, been an ardent friend of parliamentary reform, he was now become its opponent; and by Mr. Gally Knight, who declared that he had gone through exactly the reverse process in change of opinion.

On the second night of the debate, Sir John Malcolm strongly advocated the preservation of nomination boroughs, as affording the means for introducing into the House those who had passed their lives in India, and were consequently the best qualified to legislate for that vast dependency. On the other side, Mr. Macaulay delivered a most brilliant speech in favour of the bill, which he wound up by saying, “Nothing can prevent the passing of this noble law—this second Bill of Rights. I do call it the second Bill of Rights, and so will the country call it, and so will our children. I call it “the Greater Charta” of the Liberties of England. Eighteen hundred and thirty-one is destined to exhibit the first example of an established—of a deep-rooted system, removed without bloodshed, or violence, or rapine; all points being debated—every punctilio observed—the peaceful industry of the country never for a moment checked or compromised—and the authority of the law not for one instant

suspended. These are things of which we may well be proud. These are things which make us look with confidence and good hope to the future destinies of the human race. These are things that enable us to look forward to a long series of tranquil and happy years, in which we shall have a popular government and a loyal people; and in which war, if war be inevitable, shall find us a united nation—of years pre-eminently distinguished by the progress of arts and science, and of knowledge generally; by the diminution of the public burdens, and by all those victories of peace, in which, more than in the most splendid military successes, consist the true prosperity of states, and the glory of statesmen. Sir, it is with these feelings and these hopes, that I give my most cordial assent to this measure, considering it desirable in itself, and, at the present moment, and in the present temper of the people, indispensably necessary to the repose of the empire, and the stability of the throne.”

On the third night of the debate, signs of weariness were early manifested, particularly during the speeches of Mr. John (since Lord) Campbell, and Sir Charles Wetherell, who was more vehement than powerful in his opposition. Mr. E. L. Bulwer ably supported the measure, and thus concluded:—“I accept this measure as the promise of a brighter dawn. We are at length about to obtain, in a peaceful manner, a new charter, as precious as that one which our fathers formerly conquered at the point of the sword. But there is this difference between our ancestors and ourselves—they fought for the liberties of the people as the inheritance of the past, we assert them as the prerogative of the present; they demanded the record of tradition—we claim the consequence of improvement. At length our claim is allowed; but how great have been the doubts and difficulties through which we struggled to enforce it. Through many a long year were those principles denounced as theories by yonder honourable

gentlemen, which the voice of the country now unanimously proclaims to be truth. Thus many a long year did the honourable gentlemen beside me vainly declare that there would come a time when we should no longer suffer bad things, because our ancestors had suffered worse—that there would come a time when the hoary head of inveterate abuse would neither claim reverence, nor obtain protection. The time has come : it has come slowly, but it has come ; rendering for ever memorable the reign of our gracious sovereign, whose name is of happy augury in the annals of this country ; and as it has hitherto been glorious by our escape from bigotry, so it will now be celebrated by our deliverance from corruption.”

Sir Robert Peel was loudly called for before he rose to address the House, and he was heard throughout with great attention. He began by saying :

“ There is one advantage resulting from the present system of representation, which has not been prominently referred to in debate—I mean the advantage of ensuring to the minority its fair influence on the public councils. As this House is at present constituted, no opinion, however unpopular, is excluded ; nor can any degree of public excitement and enthusiasm bar altogether the avenues through which those who are uninfected by the prevailing fear, and are prepared to struggle against the current of popular clamour, can ensure access to the deliberations of parliament—of that advantage I now avail myself—and as a member of that minority, ridiculed as a despairing, and denounced as an unpopular minority, I claim the privilege of being heard with attention—a privilege which ought to be conceded with an indulgence proportioned to the comparative smallness of our numbers, and hopelessness of our cause. I am swayed by no motives of self-interest to take my present course—I have no borough to protect—I have contracted no obligation to those who possess that influence which the present

measure is intended to destroy, and I am about to resist the wishes of a great and overpowering majority—backed by the support of an united government—and acting in conformity with the supposed opinions and wishes of the king.

“ My opinions therefore—erroneous though they may be—cannot be influenced by considerations of personal or political advantage. While I have been listening to this debate, and have heard the cheers echoed and re-echoed from each side of the House, on the introduction of some topic involving personal allusions or party criminations, I have more than once lamented that we allowed ourselves to be diverted by matters of such trifling concern, from the mighty subject of our deliberations, and that we forgot even for a moment, amidst the excitement of party conflict, that we are occupied in the establishment of a new system of representation, involving in its issue the highest and most permanent interests of the country.” In reference to some remarks made by Mr. J. Brougham, he said—

“ The honourable member who spoke last, expressed his hope that I was prepared to bring forward some scheme of reform, and he taunted me with being at length a reformer. But what did I say in the last session respecting reform? I said, that having left one government in consequence of its resistance to reform, and another government having been formed pledged to reform, I would, rather than risk a change of government—seeing the impossibility of constituting an administration opposed to reform—support a measure of reform introduced by my opponents, provided that measure was perfectly consistent with the safety of the institutions of the country. I said, I might be wrong, or I might be right, but that is the extent of the declaration I made, and which I am prepared to make again. I have been uniformly opposed to reform upon principle, because I

was unwilling to open a door which I saw no prospect of being able to close ; it was not because I thought that the transfer of the franchise from East Retford to Manchester might be in itself injurious, but because I was of opinion that a government, which should unsettle the minds of the people upon this subject, would be responsible for the consequences that must result.

“ I certainly was one of those who opposed the giving representatives to Manchester and to other large towns ; because I thought the advantage of such a measure not sufficient to counterbalance the evil of altering the constitution of parliament, and agitating the public mind on the question of reform. And if it be truly said that the demand for reform has been a steadily increasing demand, if it be a fact that nothing short of this bill will give the least satisfaction, surely I was justified in doubting whether the grant of members to three or four large towns would stay the public appetite for reform, and whether it would not prove the commencement, rather than the close, of the discussion. I do not admit, however, that the settled opinion of this country is fixed, and permanently decided in favour of this bill.

“ I would advise those who assert it, not to rely too confidently on the duration of the present excitement, to bear in mind the causes which have combined to foment it—and to consider whether they are of lasting operation. Our sober judgment has been disturbed by the recent events in France, by sympathy in the triumph of liberal opinions, and by a natural indignation at the illegal exercise of authority.” He thus concluded : “ I do not, for a moment, call in question the undoubted prerogative of the crown to dissolve the late parliament, but I do call in question the prudence with which that prerogative was exercised, the time and mode of

its exercise, and, above all, the lavish use of his Majesty's name and authority, with the view of influencing election contests.

" I regret most deeply, that through their organs of the press, the government condescended to the humiliation of propagating tales, which could only be addressed and suited to the lowest and most vulgar class of minds. I regret most deeply that they should, for any purpose whatever, have resorted to the dangerous expedient of teaching the people to associate loyalty to their king with hostility to the constitution of parliament. I do not think it a happy circumstance that the feelings of the people have been thus excited ; I doubt the existence of a unanimous feeling as connected with this measure, on their part, and I deeply regret that the sober and temperate judgment of the people has been disturbed by a variety of causes. But, sir, if this feeling be such as we have heard it represented, and if it shall permanently endure, I am then ready to admit that no government can go on without enacting such measures as shall alleviate and remove that intense feeling. But all I ask is, time for deliberation upon a question of such vital importance ; I say, do not rely upon this temporary excitement—do not allow that to be your only guide—do not force this Reform bill upon the country, upon the assumption that the unanimous voice of the people demands it. I doubt the existence of any such ground ; and if you do find hereafter that you have been mistaken—if you find that the people have only been acting under an excitement produced by temporary causes—if they are already sobering down from their enthusiasm for the days of July, let the House remember that when the steady good sense and reason of the people of England shall return, they will be the first to reproach us with the baseness of having sacrificed the constitution in the vain hope of conciliating the favour of a temporary burst of popular feeling :

they will be the first to blame us for deferring this question to popular opinion, instead of acting upon our own judgment. For my own part, not seeing the necessity for this reform, doubting much whether the demand for reform is so urgent, and doubting still more whether, if carried, this measure can be a permanent one, I give my conscientious opposition to this bill. In doing this I feel the more confident, because the bill does not fulfil the conditions recommended from the throne—because it is not founded on the acknowledged principles of the constitution—because it does not give security to the acknowledged prerogatives of the crown—because it does not guarantee the legitimate rights, influences, and privileges of both Houses of Parliament—because it is not calculated to render secure and permanent the happiness and prosperity of the people—and, above all, because it subverts a system of government which has combined security to personal liberty and protection to property, with vigour in the executive power of the state, in a more perfect degree than ever existed in any age, or in any other country in the world.”

Sir Robert Peel was answered by Sir Francis Burdett and Lord John Russell, the latter of whom complimented the right honourable baronet on the moderate tone and calm temper of his speech. The House then divided, when there appeared for the second reading, 367; against it, 231; thus sanctioning the measure by a majority of 136, which was a larger number than had been expected.

The opponents of the measure were not daunted by defeat; they adopted the unusual course of contesting every clause and every item in the schedules while the bill was in committee, and thus protracted the discussion to an extent which severely taxed the patience of the country. One amendment—called, from its proposer, the Chandos clause—was carried against ministers; its effect was to confer the franchise in

counties on tenants-at-will paying £50 a year, and it was supported by many ardent reformers as a desirable extension of the suffrage, while others more reasonably regarded it as fatal to the independence of the county representation, by introducing a class of voters who could not dare to go against their landlords. The labours of the committee, which began on the 12th of July, were not concluded until the 7th of September. Three nights were given to the consideration of the report, in which some alterations, chiefly verbal, were introduced. The third reading was carried by a majority of 55, in a House of 171 members, in consequence of the division taking place unexpectedly, without any discussion. But a debate, which was protracted during three nights, arose on the question, "that the bill do pass?" Mr. Croker took the lead in the opposition, and was answered by Mr. Stanley. Crampton, the Solicitor-General for Ireland, introduced an episodic debate by declaring that the crown might withhold writs from the condemned boroughs by virtue of the royal prerogative,—an opinion which was condemned on all sides, and very awkwardly retracted. Sir Robert Peel closed the debate in a very powerful speech. Its conclusion was couched in a tone of melancholy resignation, and was unlike anything uttered before or since in his political career. "I cannot," he said, "consent to the changes which this bill proposes. I have nothing to do with any other measure of reform; I have none to propose myself. I oppose the bill because it will effect too extensive a change. It is not making an addition to an existing structure to accommodate an increasing family, but uprooting all the foundations of an ancient edifice, and attempting to construct a new one. I do not believe that the new structure will be permanent. The arguments that are now adduced in favour of change will, in seasons of distress, be applied with equal force against the new system. The instruments of destruction

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have been employed with complete success against the constitution; but I would implore those who have used them, before they retire from the entrenchments from which their fatal attacks have been made, for God's sake, to spike their guns! and to remove from the sight of the future occupiers of those places, every instrument of destruction by which their success has been obtained; for there is not one of them, from the highest to the lowest—from the twenty-four pounder down to the smallest sparrow-shot—which might not be applied against the new system about to be created by this bill. I feel it my duty to continue, at the last stage of the bill, the opposition which I offered to it at the commencement. I continue my opposition on precisely the same grounds, with no increased predilection for changing the constitution of my country. Popular opinion has been sufficiently demonstrated in favour of the measure, to induce me to treat that opinion with the utmost respect, and to consider maturely whether I am justified in opposing it. I regret to say that my deliberative judgment is against the measure. I do not think that it will conduce to the permanent interests of the country. On that ground, and that ground only, and not for the purpose of maintaining the interests of the peers, or other persons, I feel myself bound to oppose the wishes of the people. I cheerfully submit to pay the penalty to which that difference of opinion subjects me. With reluctance I surrender the hold which I may have on the people's esteem. That is a penalty which they have a right to inflict, but they have no right or power to compel me to acquiesce in their error—for I believe them to be in error. I will not involve myself in the responsibility of the measure; and being, with others, a life-renter only in the admirable constitution which has hitherto secured the peace and happiness of my country, I will not be instrumental in cutting off the inheritance of those who are to

succeed me." The bill was carried by the majority of 109—the ayes being 345, and the noes 236.

On the 22nd of September, Lord John Russell, attended by more than a hundred of the most ardent reformers, carried the bill up to the Lords, where it was read a first time, and the second reading was fixed for the 3rd of October. In this brief interval every possible exertion was made, by means of public meetings, and powerful articles in the press, to induce their lordships to sanction the measure, and thus put an end to the political agitation which interrupted the business, and menaced the tranquillity, of the country. Lord Brougham wrote a pamphlet of great power, but exhibiting more violence than was necessary, predicting the evil consequences which he declared would inevitably follow from the rejection of the measure; and some orators went so far as to declare that, should it be rejected, the hereditary peerage itself would be in danger. The debate was protracted through five nights, and the bill was then rejected by a majority of forty-one.

Fortunately the next day was so rainy and tempestuous that no public meeting could be convened in London, and time was thus afforded to inform the people that the ministers still resolved to persevere with the measure, and that the House of Commons would solemnly pledge itself to their support. A resolution to this effect was moved by Lord Ebrington, on the 10th of October, and after a brief debate, of very little interest, was carried by a majority of 131,—the ayes being 329, and the noes 198. The promptitude with which this wise means of restoring public confidence was adopted, prevented any popular disturbance in London, beyond the breaking of a few windows. There were, however, more serious riots at Derby and Nottingham. In the latter town, the ancient castle, once a royal residence, but now the property of the Duke of Newcastle, was sacked

and burned. This, however, was an advantage to his grace ; he received a large sum as a compensation for the destruction of his property, and, by leaving the castle in ruins, he was released from the necessity of spending a large annual sum, which he could ill afford, on maintaining its baronial state. Parliament was prorogued on the 20th of October by the king in person.

In reference to the Reform bill, his Majesty said,—“In the interval of repose which may now be afforded to you, I am sure it is unnecessary for me to recommend to you the most careful attention to the preservation of tranquillity in your respective counties. The anxiety which has been so generally manifested by my people, for the accomplishment of a constitutional reform in the Commons House of Parliament, will, I trust, be regulated by a due sense of the necessity of order and moderation in their proceedings.

“To the consideration of this important question, the attention of parliament must necessarily again be called at the opening of the ensuing session ; and you may be assured of my unaltered desire to promote its settlement by such improvements in the representation, as may be found necessary for security to my people, the full enjoyment of their rights, which, in combination with those of the other orders of the state, are essential to the support of our free constitution.”

Parliament was prorogued to the 22nd of November, and subsequently by royal proclamation to the 6th of December. In the interval, Sir Robert Peel retired to his country-seat near Tamworth—the only part of England where the question of reform excited little attention, because it was evident that no political change would produce any change in its representation. The tranquillity of Tamworth afforded a striking contrast to the excitement of Bristol. Sir Charles Wetherell, the recorder of that city, proceeded thither to

attend to his official duty, on Saturday the 29th of October ; he was received by the Tory corporation with a greater parade of civic pomp than was usual, which, however complimentary to a political partisan, was rather an imprudent manifestation to a judicial functionary. The populace, ardently attached to reform, began to hiss, hoot, and throw stones. As their violence increased, the feebleness of the magisterial power became more apparent ; the Mansion House was stormed ; the mayor, recorder, and guests barely escaped with their lives. These riots were continued for three days ; great mischief was done, and a large amount of property destroyed, before the civil and military authorities ventured to act with energy. Tranquillity was restored on Tuesday, by a manifestation of vigour greater than would have been necessary to prevent the evils altogether, had it been displayed on the preceding Saturday.

Parliament was again assembled on the 6th of December ; it was opened by the king in person, and the royal speech dwelt strongly on the circumstances which had induced the ministers to summon both Houses together after so brief an interval of rest. His Majesty said—

“ My Lords, and Gentlemen,—I have called you together that you might resume, without further delay, the important duties to which the circumstances of the time require your immediate attention ; and I sincerely regret the inconvenience which I am well aware you must experience, from so early a renewal of your labours, after the short interval allowed you for repose from the fatigues of last session.

“ I feel it to be my duty, in the first place, to recommend to your most careful consideration, the measures which will be proposed to you for a reform in the Commons’ House of Parliament ; a speedy and satisfactory settlement of this question becomes daily of more pressing importance to the

security of the state, and to the contentment and welfare of my people."

William IV. did not express himself too strongly; so bent were the people on achieving the reform which had been proposed, that even the menacing approach of a mysterious pestilence failed to divert them from their object for a single instant. Cholera, the scourge of India, assuming at once a mortal and contagious type, spread through Persia into Russia, and thence gradually extended its ravages into Western Europe. All the sanitary precautions taken to check its march, proved utterly unavailing; boards of health were therefore established, and hospitals prepared to meet the exigencies of its expected arrival. Just before parliament met, the disease appeared with marked symptoms in the port of Sunderland, and this fearful presage was thus noticed in the royal speech. The king said—

"It is with great regret that I have observed the existence of a disease at Sunderland, similar in its appearance and character to that which has existed in many parts of Europe. Whether it is indigenous, or has been imported from abroad, is a question involved in much uncertainty; but its progress has neither been so extensive nor so fatal as on the Continent. It is not, however, the less necessary to use every precaution against the further extension of this malady; and the measures recommended by those who have had the best opportunity of observing it, as most effectual for this purpose, have been adopted."

The opponents of reform made some strange efforts to employ the cholera as an instrument to defeat the ministerial measure; their organs of the press exaggerated its ravages, and deplored the discussion of any constitutional changes in the midst of a frightful pestilence; some of the clergy who were opponents of reform, did not hesitate to declare

that this mysterious visitation was a judgment of Providence on the nation for meddling with institutions consecrated by religious associations and connections; and others endeavoured to excite popular alarm, by declaring that "the worst is to come." On the other hand, the ministerial papers exerted themselves to calm the popular fears, and being ably seconded by the generous exertions of the entire medical body, they succeeded in preventing a panic which would greatly have aggravated the dangers of the disease. The disturbed state of the public mind, the uncertainty of the issue in which the ministers and people had engaged, the alarming violence in which some vehement democrats began to indulge, produced a paralyzing effect on the general interests of the country, and there was reason to apprehend some dangerous outbreak of the operatives, who lost with their employment their wages and their means of subsistence. This was an argument in favour of speedily settling the reform-question, to which no statesman could be insensible, and it is impossible to read Sir Robert Peel's speech during the debate on the address, without feeling that he attempted a reply not so much to the arguments of the reformers, as to his own inward convictions. "We are at issue," he said, "as to the causes of the unsatisfactory state of the country. Of course the advocates of reform say, that it is attributable to us who oppose their favourite bill. On the other hand, I tell you, that it is to your measures, and to your measures alone, that it is owing; for you cannot shake the foundations of the ancient institutions of a country, without producing discontent which will long survive the introduction of the measure which gave it existence. In the speech from the throne, what do I read! The admission of combinations against property, of distress, of suspended confidence, of embarrassed commerce, of interrupted and paralyzed industry. I find in the speech the admission of a spirit of violence and outrage,

which must be controlled by the power of the law, but which has hitherto only been repressed by the power of the sword. Do I hear anything of economy, of reduction of taxation, of reduction of estimates?—Nothing like it. Do I complain of this? Am I of opinion that the estimates which will shortly be proposed for our consideration are greater than the emergencies of the state require? No; but I have no hope that true economy will ever spring from reform, or at least from that reform which introduces changes into our system tending to unsettle all the principles of government. I hear sarcasms from various quarters, of the past measures of Tory governments. I hear invitations to us to attend public meetings, and to express our opinions on the great question which now agitates all bosoms—in the presence, I suppose, of the 150,000 philosophers of Birmingham. Alas! what a mockery of freedom of opinion and discussion is there! Has there ever been in the whole history of the last century, any period in which such effectual practical restrictions were imposed on the freedom of speech, as have been imposed on it since the agitation of reform? Believe me, sir, there are other tyrannies than those of individual despots. Who can deny their existence? who can doubt their galling and oppressive character, who has seen the bitter and unrelenting animosity with which the populace have pursued many of those great and illustrious characters, who acted the part of good subjects and honest men in the House of Lords, without the least suspicion of unworthy motives? And yet, can it be denied that it was not safe for them to travel home to their country-seats, after the conscientious votes which they had given in favour of the true interests of the people of England? What system of government can that be, in which you deny to your opponents the free exercise of judgment and of speech? You cannot propose changes as extensive as those of your Reform bill, without

expecting, if you are reasonable men, that they will encounter opposition. You may denounce that opposition; you may visit it with confiscation, exile, and death; but so long as honour and courage exist among men—and in English bosoms I trust these qualities will find an eternal spring—you will not, you cannot deter us from the expression of our honest opinions.”

There were men then, and now, who hinted that this passionate appeal was characterized by gross exaggeration, if not by downright hypocrisy. Never was there a more unfounded imputation: Peel, as we have seen, had spent the greater part of his early life in office; he was trammelled by its routine, and held fast by its conventionalities. He thoroughly understood the composition of the existing House of Commons, and all the circumstances by which the relative strength and balance of parties were determined, but he dreaded a reformed parliament, in which all the elements of previous calculations would have been swept away. He believed, that what have since proved to be rare exceptions—the rejection of faithful and tried servants of the public in moments of popular passion and prejudice, to make room for adventurers ready to take any pledge, and demagogues prepared to flatter any delusion—would be the general rule of elections; and at best, he could not resist the conviction that an element of doubt and uncertainty was about to be introduced into the government, dangerous to the stability of every future cabinet. The remembrance of the Clare election strengthened this belief; he had seen a popular minister of the crown, supported by the whole of the landed interest, wealth, and influence of his county, completely humbled and defeated by the union and energy of the democracy. Such he believed would be the frequent, if not the general, result in all large constituencies; and he was therefore opposed to the multiplication of their number.

Sincere reformers as we are, we cannot deny that these fears had some foundation. The general election, through which we are passing as we trace these lines, exhibit various mischievous results from the combinations of very discordant elements of discontent in large constituencies. Edinburgh, Nottingham, Lambeth, and perhaps the Tower Hamlets, have shown that the most splendid talents, the remembrance of past sufferings in the cause of reform, the greatest assiduity and skill in conducting public business, and the connection by ties of family with the most distinguished leaders of the popular cause, are not always able to resist combinations of enthusiastic Chartists, heated supporters of Voluntaryism, violent Nonconformists, and bigoted enemies of Popery. Sir Robert Peel foresaw that such contingencies would arise; he believed that they would be more numerous than they have been, and the past furnished him no suggestions for devising a remedy. A quotation made by one of his supporters, may be received as the just expression of his feelings :

“Through what variety of untried being—
Through what new scenes and changes must we pass ? —
The wide, the unbounded prospect lies before me ;
But shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it.”

With such feelings, it is no wonder that he completed the quotation, and exclaimed with Cato—

“Here will I hold.”

On the 12th of December, Lord John Russell moved for leave to introduce a new Reform bill. It was based, like the former, on the three great principles—1. the disfranchisement of decayed and inconsiderable boroughs—2. the enfranchisement of large and populous towns—and, 3, the introduction everywhere of a new electoral qualification. There were some improvements and some changes for the worse in the details, but none of any such magnitude as to

justify Sir Robert Peel's taunt that such alterations furnished ground of excuse for the rejection of the former bill. His exultation would have had some meaning, had he made these changes an apology for supporting the new measure, or at least for moderating his opposition, but he declared that no amendments whatever could induce him to adopt the principles of the ministerial measure, and in this course he was followed, though some say *led*, by Mr. Wilson Croker.

Sir Robert Peel had been hurled from office by the high Tory party for having conceded Catholic emancipation, as he was at a later period when he consented to the repeal of the corn-laws. Conscious that it was to him alone that this party was indebted for its political existence, he felt much mortified at the insult offered him, and for a time seemed to approximate to the liberals. The nation generally, and even some leaders of the Whig party, thought that his approaches would end in complete identification, and there was a general feeling of disappointment throughout the country, when the right honourable baronet was seen to fall back on the party by which he had been so scornfully rejected. He too must have felt uncomfortable when he found his leadership contested by such a questionable politician as the right honourable John Wilson Croker, especially as he could not avoid seeing that Croker enjoyed more of the confidence of the party, and possessed more real power, than the nominal leader. We do not know whether Peel despised Croker, but we have good reason to believe that Croker heartily detested Peel, who, when he seemed most extravagant in compliment, was really most covert in sarcasm. Macauley discovered this point of weakness among the anti-reformers; and in the debate on the second reading, taunted Peel with the aid he had received from the liberals in 1829, and this induced Peel to give a sketch of the circumstances under which he had introduced the measure of

Catholic emancipation. We give the explanation in his own words:—

“In the month of January, 1828,” he said, “the Duke of Wellington was called on to form an administration, in which I took a part. For several years I had been most active in opposition to the Catholic claims, and I had taken that part on the ground that I much doubted whether the removal of the disabilities complained of, would restore tranquillity to Ireland. I therefore opposed the Catholic claims, avoiding all asperity; but still my opposition had continued decided and unqualified. In 1828 I was left in a minority.

“There were then circumstances, which the time is not yet come to disclose, which convinced me that there would be more danger in continuing to resist these claims, than in yielding to them. My opinion on the subject was unchanged; for I had doubts whether the people of Ireland would be benefited by the change, which would give strength to dissent, and power to the many. From time to time, I found that the success of the Protestant party was balanced by the success of their opponents; and I thought it hopeless to maintain, with effect, a further resistance; but at the same time, I thought there could be nothing more unfortunate than that I, who had been the most strenuous in opposition, should be the individual to undertake the settlement of that question.

“It was not for the sake of any personal sacrifices I was called on to make—for I always expected that such sacrifices must be made—that I felt a repugnance to it; but that I felt I must necessarily lose the confidence of the party with whom I had so long acted; and I did feel it unfortunate that I, who had evinced the most decided opposition, should be the individual to introduce the very measure I had so long opposed. It happened that I was absent from London

in the year 1828, and I wrote my opinion on the policy of settling the Catholic question to my noble friend. I stated—
‘I have thus expressed my opinion without reserve, of the first great question of all—on the policy of seriously considering this long-agitated question, with a view to an adjustment. I have proved, I trust, that it is no false delicacy with respect to past opinions, nor any fear of charges of inconsistency, that will prevent me from taking that part which the present danger and the new position of affairs seem to require.

“‘I am ready to do so, if it is absolutely necessary.

“‘I think there is less of danger in the settlement of the question, than in leaving it, as it has been, an open question, by the effects of which the government has been on many occasions paralyzed. I must at the same time say, that I think it would not conduce to the satisfactory settlement of the question, that the charge of it should be left in my hands. Personal considerations are entirely out of the question. I show this by avowing that, in case of necessity, I am ready to undertake the duty; but I think I could support the measure more safely, if my support of it were given out of the House. Any authority which it may be thought I possess among the Protestant party, would be increased by my retirement. I have been too deeply engaged in opposition to concessions, to make it advantageous that I should be the individual to originate this measure.’ I mention this to show that circumstances had compelled me to undertake the settlement of that question. I did afterwards undertake to introduce a measure for the settlement of that question; but I remained till January, 1829, in the belief that I should retire from office, and give support to that measure in my private capacity alone. But it was made evident to me, that my retirement, together with the king’s opinion on the Catholic question, would absolutely

preclude the satisfactory settlement of it. I wrote a letter to my friend, expressing an earnest wish to avoid undertaking the painful office.

"That was on the 13th of January, 1829; but knowing the difficulties with which he was at that time surrounded, I said—'I speak without reserve. If my retirement should prove, in your opinion, after the communication you have made, an insurmountable obstacle to the course you intend to pursue, in that case you shall command any service I can render.' The memorandum endorsed on that letter states, that the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishops of London and Durham, had that day had an audience of the Duke of Wellington, to declare that they should give their decided opposition to the proposed plan.

"That circumstance made it impossible for me to retire. I had advised the king to concede the measure. I could not shrink from taking part in introducing the measure I had advised him to adopt; and no other consideration on earth should have induced me to stand in that place, and to propose it. But if I believed, as circumstances had compelled me to believe, that a settlement of the question was necessary, and that my retirement was an insuperable obstacle to the settlement, I appeal to any man of honour whether I should have been justified in retiring. I had advised the king; and could I, when his Majesty said—'I have scruples—you ask me to make a sacrifice of them, yet you yourself refuse to make a similar personal sacrifice'—could I, when thus appealed to as a subject, refuse to undertake the task?"

The right honourable baronet then proceeded at great length to denounce the democratic tendencies of the bill, and the difficulties which the influence of popular impulses would oppose to the regular march of government. A popular government, he declared, would be deficient in that steadiness

and caution which had procured for England the confidence of the world; and he feared that the ten-pound householders belonged to a class not likely to pay respect to the rights of property. In conclusion, he said:—

“ This bill therefore I shall oppose to the last, believing as I do, that the people are grossly deluded as to the practical benefits which they have been taught to expect from it; that it is the first step, not directly to revolution, but to a series of changes which will affect the property, and alter the mixed constitution, of the country; that it will be fatal to the authority of the House of Lords; and that it will force on a series of further concessions.

“ I will oppose it to the last, convinced that though my opposition will be unavailing, it will not be fruitless, because the opposition now made will oppose a bar to further concessions hereafter. If the whole of the House were now to join in giving way, it would have less power to resist future changes. On this ground I take my stand; not opposed to any well-considered reform of any of our institutions which the well-being of the country demands, but opposed to this reform in our constitution, because it tends to root up the feelings of respect towards it, which are founded in prejudice perhaps, as well as in higher sources of veneration for all our institutions. I believe that reform will do this, and I will wield all the power I possess to oppose the gradual progress of that spirit of democracy to which others think we ought gradually to yield; for if we make those concessions, it will only lead to establish the supremacy of that principle. We may, I know, make it supreme (we may be enabled to establish a republic, full, I have no doubt, of energy—not wanting, I have no doubt, in talent,) but in my conscience, I believe fatal to our mixed form of government, and ultimately destructive of all those usages and practices which have long ensured to us a large share of peace and prosperity,

and which have made and preserved this the proudest kingdom in the annals of the world."

The House divided on the morning of Sunday, December 18, when the second reading was carried by a majority of 324 to 162, and the House immediately adjourned for the Christmas holidays to the 17th of January.

During the recess legal proceedings were instituted against the ring-leaders in the recent riots. Twenty-one were capitally convicted, but only three were executed; the Tories protested against such leniency as an incitement to crime, while the great body of the people wished that a pardon had been extended to all the criminals. Soon after, Colonel Brereton, who had commanded the military at Bristol, was brought to trial before a court-martial, on the charge of having neglected his duty. The censures to which he was exposed, and the bitterness of the attacks made upon him by the Tory press, produced such an effect on the mind of the gallant officer, that he committed suicide on the fifth day of the proceedings. Captain Waddington, who was tried on a similar charge, was sentenced to be cashiered, but, in compliance with the unanimous recommendation of the court, he was permitted to retire from the service by selling his troop. It is not to be denied, that these courts-martial were conducted in strict compliance with military law, but it is equally undeniable that most of the officers who composed them could not wholly disguise their political feelings, but exhibited a decided hostility to the cause of reform.

When the House re-assembled on the 17th of January, Mr. Wilson Croker became the real leader of the opposition to reform, Sir Robert Peel only lending such aid as was necessary to support debate. The most important discussion was on the clause for giving members to the metropolitan districts, to which the chief organs of the Tories, including the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Maga-*

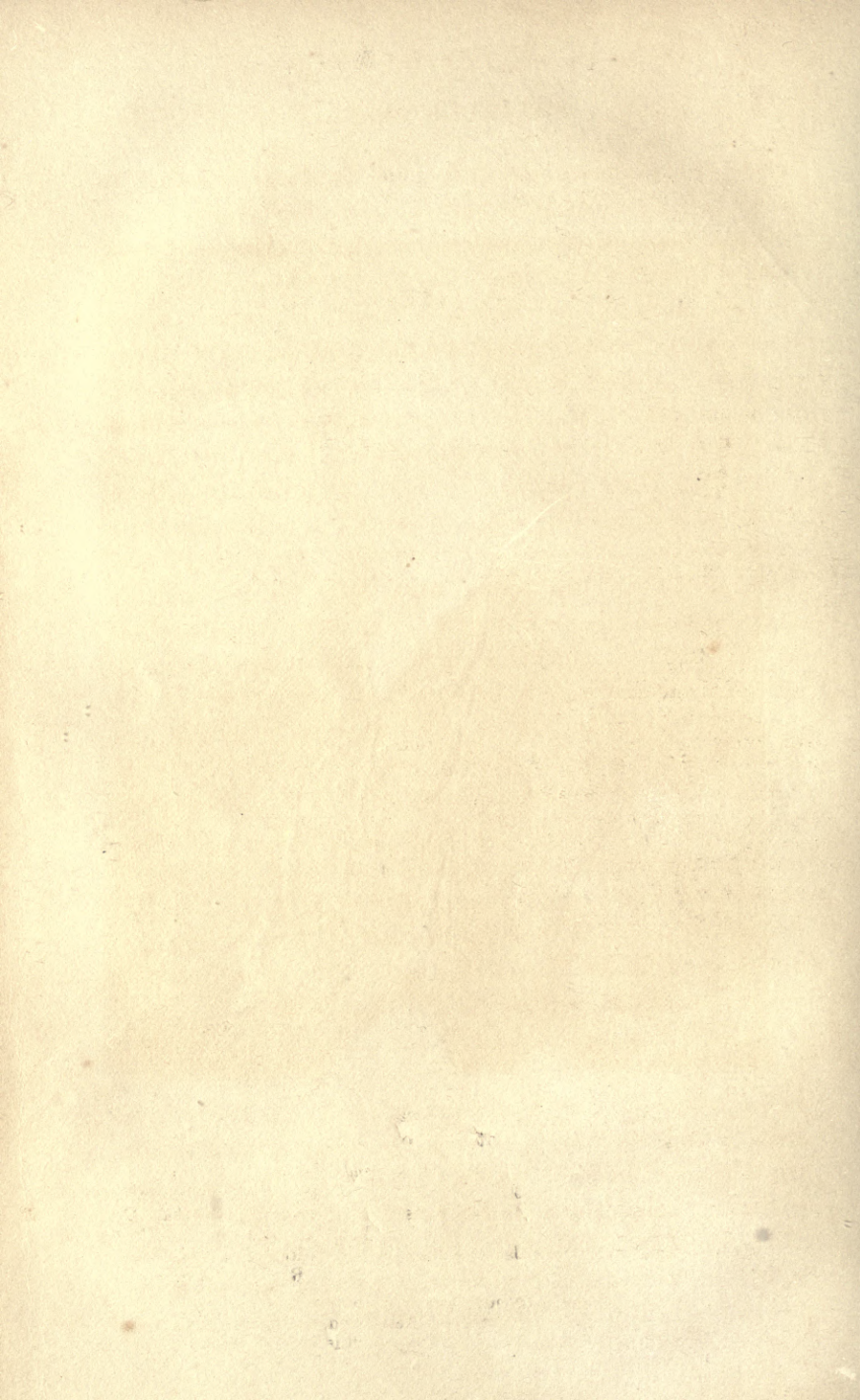


Painted by Sir Tho^s Lawrence, P.R.A.

Engraved by T. H. Parry.

THE RT^{HON} JOHN WILSON CROKER, L.L.D. F. R. S. &c &c. &c.

John Croker



zine, had expressed most decided hostility, declaring it the most objectionable because the most democratic feature of the bill. Croker, whose imagination has been ever haunted by vague images of the horrors of the first French revolution, attempted to alarm the House at the proposal to divide London into *Sections*, and, though little heed was paid to the cry, we find him repeating the same note of terror when, at a later period, he sought to convict the Anti-Corn-Law League of revolutionary intentions. Sir Robert Peel's objections to the measure were of a very different character; he objected to the inconveniently large constituencies which would be thus formed, and said that these boroughs showed the impropriety of making a uniform £10 franchise. This uniformity would curtail the franchise in the smaller boroughs where it was desirable to have it extended, and enlarge it where its extension was most objectionable, that is, among aggregated masses peculiarly disposed to form political combination, and most liable to be agitated by the operations of the press. The division gave ministers a majority of 80. Croker, however, remained undaunted; he fought the bill clause by clause, and caused such delay, that it was not until the 23rd of March, that the bill was passed by a majority of 116. The debate on the final stage was a wearisome repetition of former arguments, and may therefore be passed over without notice.

It had been currently reported and believed, that the king had given his ministers power to create an unlimited number of peers, if they could not otherwise succeed in obtaining a majority for the second reading in the House of Lords. On the 10th of February, Mr. T. S. Duncombe, then member for Hertford, and a well-known advocate of reform, declared, "that his Majesty had not withstood the advice to create peers, but had armed the ministry with powers to carry into full efficiency the national measure of reform; and he

would tell those ministers, that if they did not exercise this power with prompt energy, they would incur the indignation of the country, and deserve impeachment." When, therefore, it was seen that ministers brought the bill up to the Lords without creating a single new peer, it was naturally and rightly concluded that some of those lords who had opposed reform in the former session, were now willing that such an embarrassing question should be finally and satisfactorily settled. These peers, who from their subsequent conduct acquired the appellation of "the Waverers," were aware that new peers would be created, if there were a chance of the bill being rejected on the second reading, and they probably hoped that, after having thus manifested their willingness to receive the measure and acknowledge its principle, they would be allowed to introduce such alterations in committee as would render it less sweeping and less democratic.

The bill was read a first time in the House of Lords on the 26th of March; Lords Harrowby and Wharncliffe, the chiefs of "the Waverers," declared their intention to withdraw their former hostility and vote for the second reading, while the Duke of Wellington and the Earl of Carnarvon declared that they would persist in their opposition. The second reading was moved on the 9th of April, and the debate was continued on the 10th, 11th, and 13th, having been suspended on the 12th in consequence of a levee being held at court on that day. The most remarkable speech was that of the Earl of Harrowby, who had on the former occasion been one of the most distinguished opponents of the bill, and had made the finest oration delivered against it in either house of parliament. On the present occasion he was hardly less eloquent in its favour. He said, that "the present state of the public mind with reference to this bill betokened a state of things which no honest mind

could contemplate without alarm, evincing, as it did, a want of that confidence on the part of the people in the institutions of the country, without which there could be no effectual and beneficial co-operation between the nation and the government. The people had no confidence—and, after the two records of its own condemnation, could have no confidence—in the House of Commons. Had not the House of Commons by large and increased majorities declared that it was unworthy the confidence of the people whom it professed to represent? And if so, was it for their lordships to turn round and gainsay a decision thus solemnly pronounced and repeated?" The "Waverers" certainly made out a strong case; they asked those who persevered in their opposition what they proposed to do after they had rejected the bill? It was notorious that the House of Commons would not reverse its decision; a dissolution would only give a House still more enthusiastically bent on reform than that which had already twice pronounced in its favour. The Duke of Wellington, as before, insisted that it would be impossible to carry on the civil government of the country under such a system of representation as the bill proposed to establish. The House divided on the morning of the 13th of April, when the second reading was carried by a majority of nine; the numbers being—

Contents present	128	proxies 56	total 184
Non-contents present . . .	126	proxies 49	total 175
Majority present	2	proxies 7	total 9

As the anti-reformers had gained three votes, and the reformers had lost three votes since the former rejection of the measure, we have to account for fifty-six votes, to explain this victory, viz., the six just mentioned,—the adverse majority of forty-one,—and the favourable majority of nine. On comparing the lists, we find that seventeen who voted

against reform in 1831 supported it in 1832, thus making a difference of thirty-four votes.

Ten who voted against it in 1831 did not vote at all in 1832, which, added to the former, gives forty-four votes.

And twelve who did not vote in 1831 supported the measure in 1832, thus completing the fifty-six votes. Still a majority of nine, out of which seven were proxies, was not sufficient to save the bill from the danger of being mutilated in committee. So soon as the House met after the Easter recess, Lord Lyndhurst led the way in impairing the efficiency of the measure, by proposing that the disfranchising clauses should be postponed until the amount of enfranchisement to be conceded had been previously determined. Earl Grey strenuously objected to such a mode of proceeding, for he well knew that enfranchisement was the most odious thing possible to the majority of the House, and would only be conceded to supply the vacancies previously created by disfranchisement. On a division, the ministers were left in a minority by thirty-five votes. Earl Grey immediately moved that the House should resume, and that the further consideration of the bill should be adjourned. Some slight opposition was made to this reasonable proposal, but it was finally adopted, and thus the 7th of May left the question of reform in greater perplexity than ever.

On the morning of the 8th, Earl Grey, accompanied by Lord-Chancellor Brougham, posted down to the king, who was then at Windsor, and having explained the situation of affairs, offered to the king the alternative of giving to ministers the power of creating such a number of peers as would enable them to pass the bill in all its efficiency, or of accepting their resignation. William IV. asked for some time to consider.—Had not the sailor-king been as honest a man as ever breathed, suspicion would have attached to

such a delay, as every man in his senses had foreseen, not merely the probability, but almost the absolute certainty of such a crisis for more than eighteen months. The general belief, at the time was, that Queen Adelaide thoroughly disliked the Whigs and their Reform bill, and that her influence had been exerted to check the enthusiasm with which William IV. had originally supported both.

On the 9th of May the king declared that he preferred accepting the resignation of the ministers to the creation of an unlimited number of peers. On the same evening, Earl Grey in the Lords, and Lord Althorpe in the Commons, announced that their ministry was at an end, and that they only held their places until their successors should be appointed. Such promptitude quite disconcerted the anti-reformers; they could not expect to form a new ministry in the face of a hostile House of Commons, with the absolute certainty that a dissolution would only lead to the election of a new parliament still more hostile. The Earl of Carnarvon felt this most keenly, and laboured to convince the country that the danger to reform by the recent vote of the House of Lords was merely imaginary, and that Earl Grey was not justified in tendering his resignation. Lord Carnarvon proposed the bold measure of proceeding with the reform bill irrespective of the ministry—the best course which his party could have adopted; but not being supported, he did not persevere.

While the anti-reformers were thus perplexed, the reformers exhibited equal promptitude and vigour. Lord Ebrington, immediately after Lord Althorpe's announcement, gave notice that he would on the next night move an address to the king, and also a call of the House "to guard against backsliders and time-watchers, and show the people who were their honest and consistent representatives, and who had proved recreants to their duty." On the 10th

of May he made his memorable motion—"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, humbly to represent to his Majesty the deep regret felt by the House at the change which has been announced in his Majesty's councils, by the retirement of those ministers in whom this House continues to repose unabated confidence.

"That this House, in conformity with the recommendation contained in his Majesty's most gracious speech from the throne, has framed and sent up to the House of Lords, a bill for a reform in the representation of the people, by which they are convinced that the prerogatives of the crown, the authority of both Houses of Parliament, the rights and liberties of the people, are equally secured.

"That to the progress of this measure, this House considers itself bound in duty to state to his Majesty that his subjects are looking with the most intense interest and anxiety; and they cannot disguise from his Majesty their apprehension, that any successful attempt to mutilate or impair its efficiency, would be productive of the greatest disappointment and dismay.

"This House is therefore compelled by warm attachment to his Majesty's person and government, humbly, but most earnestly, to implore his Majesty to call to his councils such persons only as will carry into effect, unimpaired in all its essential provisions, that bill for the reform of the representation of the people, which has recently passed this House."

The debate on this spirited motion, was unusually uninteresting. Sir Robert Peel reprobated the proposal to create new peers, for the purpose of carrying any particular measure, as bad in itself, and most dangerous as a precedent. His opponents threw the blame on the obstinacy of those who had rendered such a measure necessary. After a long and angry scene of crimination and recrimination, the House divided, and ministers had a majority of eighty.

This bold move rendered it impossible to form a new ministry without having recourse to a dissolution of parliament, which no anti-reformer, in the existing state of the country, could have hazarded. The king, on refusing Earl Grey's proposition, had summoned Lord Lyndhurst to his assistance, and he recommended that the Duke of Wellington should be invited to form a new administration. There were two obvious obstacles to the success of such an undertaking:—the king, personally pledged to reform, required that the Duke of Wellington should carry through parliament a measure as efficacious as that of the Whigs, and the Duke was pledged to resist reform of parliament in every shape;—secondly, the House of Commons had passed a vote of confidence in Earl Grey's government, which it was certain would not be retracted. In spite of these adverse circumstances, the Duke of Wellington would have persevered, if he could have inspired the same courage into his party by which he was animated himself; but no one could be found to undertake the desperate task of managing a House of Commons with so large an adverse majority; and the Duke, with deep mortification, had to advise the king to call back the ministers he had so recently dismissed.

When this result was officially announced to both Houses, the Duke of Wellington in the Lords, and Sir Robert Peel in the Commons, detailed the circumstances under which they had been summoned to form an administration, and the causes of their failure. Sir Robert Peel's speech was more minute in its details than that of the Duke, but, on account of its great length, we can only present it to our readers in an abridged form, and must therefore report the abstract in the third person.

“He stated that on the day on which the resignation of ministers had been accepted, Lord Lyndhurst had called upon him, and stated to him, not that his Majesty had

applied to him to form an administration, but that his Majesty had selected him as a former chancellor, and as being by his judicial character removed from the vortex of politics, to confer with him upon the present state of affairs. His lordship then asked him whether he felt it would be in his power to enter into his Majesty's service at the present moment? stating that his Majesty felt embarrassed by the unexpected resignation of ministers, upon his refusal to create peers; and that the only other person to whom he had made this communication, was the Duke of Wellington, who was willing to render any assistance in his power to his Majesty; that the noble Duke did not wish to hold office, but that he would take and serve in any, if it were for the benefit of his Majesty. Although no formal communication had been made to him yet, as he knew not the use of reserves, he still thought it right to state, that the question was put to him, whether or not he would accept what in political life was usually called the highest object of ambition. It was notified to him that the acceptance of office must be with the clear understanding that his Majesty's declaration with respect to reform should be carried into effect, and that the condition of the acceptance of office was to be the carrying through of an extensive reform. He replied to Lord Lyndhurst, upon the impulse of the moment—but not less upon the impulse of feelings, which it would be impossible for the authority or the example of any man, or any set of men, to weaken, and on which no reasoning could produce a contrary decision—that it would be utterly impossible for him to accept office. He said to his noble friend, that in the present state of affairs, he considered extensive reform to mean the leading provisions of the Reform bill—he did not say all of them, but all the main principles of the bill.

“He then said that he must decide for himself on the instant, and on a view of the peculiar situation in which

he stood, that he felt the difficulty of the position in which the king was placed, and that he was most anxious to do anything to remove that difficulty; but he also felt that, if he accepted office without a light heart, a firm step, and an approving conscience, he could render no benefit either to his sovereign or the country. That the situation of difficulty he was placed in on account of his deep feeling on this subject, was such as no public man had ever before experienced, he believed no one in that House would deny. He had been the inveterate enemy of all extensive reform; he had objected to the principles of the bill, some of the provisions of which he had declared to be fraught with injustice—and he had stated that to the principles and details of the bill he would, to the last, offer his decided resistance. He had often stated these his principles; and to those with whom he acted he had made an early declaration of his opinion, that he must take such a part upon the Reform bill as would preclude him from the possibility of taking office. Having clearly done this, he would then ask every member of the House, whether, out of its 658 members, he ought to be the man to stand in Lord Althorpe's place, and advocate its provisions? If it were necessary that there should be a mediator between the hostile parties, was he the proper person to hold that situation, who had been himself one of the contending parties? Was it likely, that if important modifications were to be introduced into the bill, he could persuade that majority to which he had been opposed, to accede to these modifications? He would therefore ground his vindication of the course he had pursued, if vindication were necessary, on the peculiar position in which he stood. He was far from impugning the motives of those who had been willing to act in this way, for he believed that those who were at such a crisis as the present willing to devote themselves to the service of the crown, were actuated by the highest, most honourable, and most

disinterested motives. Their reasons for following this course would be, that they should fall in their own esteem, if they did not make that sacrifice; so, on the other hand, his reason for his conduct was, that he could not, consistently with a feeling of personal honour, consent to accept office. It was impossible that he could stand in any situation which would allow him to propose the passing of that bill; because he should suffer in his own self-esteem without rendering any advantage to the country. There was this additional reason why he should not come into office—namely, that he did not think it would be for the benefit of the king's service.

“With regard to the English bill, the difficulty in that House was over; but, at all events, there would be a great difference between the proposer and mover of the bill, and the mere adopter of it. But with respect to the Scotch and Irish bills, these were not yet passed. They were measures against which he had given his pronounced and decided opinion, particularly the Irish bill; and it was therefore utterly impossible that he could come into office for the purpose of passing them. With respect also to reform generally, it would be difficult to carry into effect the Reform bill with such alterations as he should deem necessary for the public welfare—alterations which might be easily effected by those who had originated it. Modifications might be introduced by ministers, and he trusted they were now in a situation to carry such as would allay the alarm felt by many; but from him they would not be accepted by the country as being either beneficial or final. He believed, indeed, that the bill would be accepted by the House, but he was also of opinion, that those who were to be entitled by it to new franchises and privileges, would not be obliged to him, and that, on the contrary, the desire would be increased for the extension of those privileges which might, under any modification introduced by him, be controlled or

curtailed. He had acted as he had stated, first from impulse ; and reasoning afterwards had convinced him that neither for his own benefit, nor that of the country, could he have accepted office, or expected to carry such modifications of the bill as the House of Lords might adopt. His opinion had thus been formed, and strengthened by reflection ; and he regretted that it should have led to a temporary separation from that man, for whom in this country he chiefly felt honour, and whom that separation had only raised in his esteem."

The difficulties which beset Sir Robert Peel at this crisis have been underrated by his friends and his enemies : he and his party had been irrevocably committed by the Duke of Wellington's rash declaration against all reform in 1830 ; it was therefore impossible for him or them to take upon themselves the responsibility of a measure which they had denounced as perilous, in its consequences, to the tranquillity and safety of the state.

The attempt to form a Conservative administration was abandoned, and Earl Grey's ministry resumed office. At the personal request of the king, a large number of the Tory peers consented to absent themselves from the House of Lords during the further discussion of the Reform bill ; resistance to the measure was therefore at an end, and it was finally carried without any new creations of peers. The Reform bills for Scotland and Ireland excited little discussion, though O'Connell bitterly condemned the latter for not giving to Ireland a due share of the representation. By the first week of August all the three bills had received the royal assent ; and the political excitement which had kept the country agitated for nearly two years, was suddenly changed into complete listlessness and apathy.

A question connected with the financial state of the country arose out of the treaty of 1814 for the incor-

poration of Belgium with Holland. By that treaty Great Britain had agreed to pay a certain share of a debt due from Holland to Russia, so long as Holland and Belgium continued to be conjoined. They had now been separated for more than a year, they were to be finally disjoined, yet ministers had been going on making the stipulated payments to Russia without any fresh authority from parliament. There is no doubt that the ministers were technically wrong, and just as little that the country was equitably bound to continue its payments to Russia. But the subject afforded too tempting an opportunity for a trial of party strength to be neglected. Mr. Herries brought forward three resolutions condemnatory of the course that had been pursued, and pressed the ministers so hard, that they only escaped a vote of censure by the narrow majority of twenty. Sir Robert Peel censured the ministers for acting without fresh authority from parliament, but he wisely refused to take any part in encouraging the invidious clamour against Russia, which too many of his supporters endeavoured to combine with the consideration of the purely technical question at issue.

During the discussion of the Reform bill, Ireland was more dangerously and furiously agitated than England, but from very different causes. The abolition of tithes was sought by open and systematic resistance to their payment, while the repeal of the Union was demanded with fresh vigour, under the pretence that Ireland had not received its fair share of representation under the Reform bill. While this complaint was made by the Catholics and their leaders, the ultra-Protestants passed a series of resolutions, bitterly censuring the government for having endangered the Protestant establishment by the excess of their concessions to popular constituencies. Predial insurrections as usual accompanied political agitations, and at the close of the year, when England and

Scotland sunk into tranquillity almost amounting to apathy, Ireland was convulsed from one end to the other. Even the ravages of the cholera, which severely afflicted the three kingdoms during the summer and autumn, failed to turn the deluded people from their mischievous associations; O'Connell had found the trade of agitation too necessary to his existence, to lay it aside even in a season of national pestilence and national suffering.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST REFORMED PARLIAMENT.

UNDOUBTEDLY the most grave objection to reform in parliament was that urged by the Duke of Wellington in his memorable question—"My lords, how is the government to be carried on?" Invariable usage has required that the different departments of the state should be represented in the House of Commons, and also that any member accepting office under the crown should vacate his seat, and brave the hazard of a new election. This system involved no practical inconvenience, so long as there were a number of small boroughs for which a minister might procure or purchase a seat when rejected by a large constituency; but it was likely to leave departments of the state unrepresented, if it were necessary to make any material changes at a time when ministers laboured under any temporary unpopularity. The Marquis of Northampton, foreseeing this disadvantage, introduced a bill to remove the necessity of vacating a seat on any change of office. His measure was coldly received, and was allowed to drop almost without debate, though there was not a statesman, in either house, unconvinced of its expediency.

Several of the opponents of reform, persuaded that it must lead to an entire and dangerous change of system, resolved to retire altogether from public life. Of these the most remarkable was Mr. John Wilson Croker, who believed that the measure was only the first stage of revolution, and that

many years would not elapse before it found its consummation in a reign of terror. Sir Robert Peel took a very different view of the change which had been wrought in the constitution; he saw that a considerable share of power had been transferred from the aristocracy to the middle classes; but he was also aware, that in a mercantile country like England, the tendencies of the middle classes would be always favourable to the maintenance of order under an enlightened and vigorous administration. He saw that the old Tory party, with its traditions of hereditary sway, direct nomination, and feudal dictation, was all but destroyed; but from the fragments he comprehended the possibility of constructing a Conservative party, based on the principle of securing a due share of influence to property, and maintaining, but at the same time gradually improving, existing institutions. He rightly calculated on the alienation from the cause of progress, of moderate and sensible men, by the rashness and violence of the more violent democrats. Mercantile men in England have a perfect horror of mobs and insurrections, not merely from the dangers which they menace, but from the interruption of trade which they occasion.

One element of his calculation—excessive violence on the part of the radicals—had no influence whatever in Scotland, was only partially felt in England, but was unfortunately perfectly rampant in Ireland. When the registration of electors required by the Reform act was completed, parliament was dissolved; the writs for the general election were issued early in December, and the members of the new parliament were chosen before the close of the year. It was found that the machinery of the Reform bill worked better than even its friends had anticipated. The arrangements by which the poll was taken at different places, tended greatly, especially in the counties, to the preservation of

the public peace, as there was no central place where a mob could be assembled to intimidate or overawe. The limitation of the duration of an election to two days—subsequently in cities and boroughs further limited to one—put an end to much bribery, corruption, and intimidation, though it did not quite extirpate these evils, even in the larger boroughs. In London, and the metropolitan boroughs generally, no disposition to disorder was manifested; we can hardly admit Westminster as an exception, where Sir John Cam Hobhouse was pelted on the hustings, though he subsequently triumphed at the poll. In the new metropolitan districts, nearly all the members chosen were gentlemen who united the qualifications of talent, habits of business, and a close connection with local interests. Manchester took the lead of all the new boroughs, in rejecting mere demagogues for gentlemen qualified by character and position to undertake the arduous duty of legislators, and it has ever since evinced itself anxious to maintain the same proud position. Cobbett, through the local influence of Mr. Fielden, obtained a seat for the newly enfranchised borough of Oldham, and a few other bold empirics, ready to pledge themselves to anything and everything, succeeded in winning the support of deluded constituencies; but Hunt was defeated at Preston, and the same fate generally awaited the whole class of political adventurers.

A great many members were returned to the first reformed parliament, who could not properly be said to belong to any party. Among these, the most prominent were those who began to be called “the philosophic radicals;” and who were all more or less trained in the school of Jeremy Bentham. They were men of great enlightenment and intelligence, rigidly devoted to principle, disinclined to make the slightest concession to temporary expediency, and disposed to treat every political question with the strictness of logic belonging

to abstract mathematics. Such men were frequently and not unreasonably denounced as "impracticables," because they were reluctant to make any concession either to popular prejudices or ministerial difficulties. Though not very numerous, these men were formidable from their talent, their zeal, and their unswerving integrity; but they were uncertain supporters, for they could not endure subordination to party tactics; they held themselves independent of all discipline and obedience.

Even those who had been elected as professed ministerialists retained for themselves greater independence of action than had ever before existed. As liberals, they would of course support a liberal administration, when any question arose to try the strength of parties; but a parliamentary campaign does not consist of mere field-days; in political as in other warfare, skirmishes are sometimes of more importance than pitched battles; and the general who has not the complete command and disposal of his forces, must be exposed to many chances of unforeseen defeat.

The Conservatives, though less numerous than the liberals, were formidable from their unanimity, their compactness, and their discipline. They did not elect Sir Robert Peel as their leader; they received him as the only possible chief that could undertake the leadership of their party; they saw, and all the world saw, that he could do better without them, than they without him; and hence they submitted implicitly to that guidance which was their only source of hope. Peel has been reproached with ingratitude to the Conservative party, in consequence of the blind obedience they yielded, and the implicit confidence they reposed; but the very excess of this obedience and this confidence proves that they were the result of necessity rather than choice: Moses might as well have been required to feel grateful to the Israelites for guiding them through the desert.

In Ireland, far more than in England, what were called liberal triumphs, were in fact ministerial defeats. O'Connell exerted all his influence, which, aided as it was by the great body of the Catholic priesthood, was really immense, to prevent the election of ministerialists, and to substitute for them his own relations and dependents. He procured the election of a set of men, usually called "his tail," who, with rare exceptions, had no other merit than abject submission to the behests of their erratic chieftain. Having no claims to respect from station, talent, or fortune, such men sadly lowered the character of the Irish representation; and from this self-inflicted degradation, Ireland has not yet recovered—

"The evil that men do, lives after them ;

The good is oft interred with their bones."

So was it with O'Connell: the only lasting result of his policy is, that the greater part of Ireland is delivered over to the mercy of a demoralized and mendicant democracy, taught to scorn all law, and at the same time to expect miracles from acts of parliament.

Such were the constituent elements of the first reformed parliament, and it obviously required no small skill, tact, and energy, in a liberal minister, to form an orderly party out of the heterogeneous mass. Lord Althorpe, the recognized ministerial leader in the House of Commons, was very generally respected by all parties, for his integrity, suavity of demeanour, and attention to business; but he had no commanding talents, such as were likely to ensure obedience, and hence, whenever there was a dangerous revolt in the ministerial camp, almost his only resource was capitulation with the mutineers.

Symptoms of disunion between the ministers and the extreme radicals, who professed to form part of their supporters, were exhibited in the choice of a Speaker, on the first night of the session. At the close of the preceding

parliament, Mr. Manners Sutton had announced his intention to resign the chair, and a retiring pension had been assigned him. But at the recent election, he had been returned for the University of Cambridge, and the ministers asserted that it was desirable to have a gentleman of his great experience to preside over a House containing so many new members as the first reformed parliament. The plain fact was, that the ministry, unwilling to add to the majority against them in the House of Lords, had withheld the peerage usually granted to a Speaker at the close of his services, and therefore deemed themselves bound to make some compensation by replacing him in the chair. Mr. Hume took the lead in denouncing this arrangement, and proposed Mr. Littleton (afterwards Lord Hatherton) as Speaker. A very angry but most uninteresting debate ensued ; but on a division, 241 members voted for Mr. Sutton, and 31 for Mr. Littleton.

The parliament was formally opened by the king in person on the 5th of February, 1833. The royal speech lamented the continuance of the civil war in Portugal ; announced the completion of the separation of Holland and Belgium ; recommended a revision of the tithe-system in England and Ireland ; and then adverted to the distracted situation of the latter country, in the following remarkable words :—

“ My Lords and Gentlemen,—In this part of the United Kingdom, with very few exceptions, the public peace has been preserved ; and it will be your anxious but grateful duty to promote, by all practicable means, habits of industry and good order amongst the labouring classes of the community.

“ On my part, I shall be ready to co-operate to the utmost of my power in obviating all just causes of complaint, and in promoting all well-considered measures of improvement. But it is my painful duty to observe, that the disturbances

in Ireland, to which I adverted at the close of the last session, have greatly increased. A spirit of insubordination and violence has risen to the most fearful height, rendering life and property insecure; defying the authority of the law, and threatening the most fatal consequences, if not promptly and effectually repressed.

"I feel confident that to your loyalty and patriotism I shall not resort in vain, for assistance in these afflicting circumstances, and that you will be ready to adopt such measures of salutary precaution, and to intrust to me such additional powers, as may be found necessary for controlling and punishing the disturbers of the public peace, and for preserving and strengthening the legislative Union between the two countries, which, with your support, and under the blessing of Divine Providence, I am determined to maintain by all the measures in my power, as indissolubly connected with the peace, security, and welfare of my people."

Mr. O'Connell stood below the bar, while the king delivered this reprobation with marked emphasis; and it is no small proof of the self-command possessed by the great agitator, that he heard it without betraying the slightest emotion.

Little comment was made on the address in answer to the speech, in the House of Lords; but no sooner had it been moved and seconded in the Commons, than O'Connell began a fierce attack, by calling it "a bloody, brutal, unconstitutional address;" and he then plunged at once into an exaggerated description of all the evils of Ireland, moral, social, and political, the whole of which he ascribed to the Whigs generally, and Mr. Secretary Stanley in particular. Stanley delivered a reply which would have crushed any other adversary, and the force of which, O'Connell felt too keenly either to forget or forgive. After having reproached the agitator for not even mentioning the repeal of the

Union through the whole of his speech, he said—"The king's speech has placed the legislative union or separation of the two countries at issue. The honourable gentleman (O'Connell) has been in the habit of representing repeal as the one and only mode of redressing the grievances of Ireland, and has promised the people of Ireland that before June twelve-months, there will be an Irish parliament sitting in College Green. Every syllable which he has spoken—every inflammatory harangue by which he has stirred up the passions of a too easily excited people, whilst he fallaciously allows the words *conciliation* and *peace* to drop from his lips, have tended to create in the minds of the people of Ireland this feeling—that as long as they are subjected to the foreign yoke, there is no hope of alleviation of what he is pleased to call their grievances; no amelioration of what he designates their degraded state; and that in repeal alone, and in the throwing off the bonds of the Saxons, any improvement of the condition of Ireland can be hoped for. The government now tells him, before the assembled people of Great Britain and Ireland, that his panacea is one which, with all the power of the government, and with, I believe, the cordial assent of the people—without which the government can do nothing—will be resisted to the death. We call upon him to meet us: we affirm our proposition, and we challenge him to negative it. Instead of doing so, he has made a speech, addressed less to those within, than to those without the walls of this House, containing the usual declamation relative to the indifference with which the affairs of Ireland are treated by this House—declamation which never received a more convincing refutation than from the patience with which the House has listened to the whole of his observations. He has accused the government of injustice towards Ireland, and of indifference to the sufferings of the people of that country, and has stated a long catalogue of

grievances, some of which ministers have already announced their intention of remedying; but with the question of the dissolution of the Union, with respect to which an opportunity offered of obtaining the test of public opinion, by means of the representatives of England—ay, and of the representatives of Ireland—with that question he has not ventured to grapple in the legislature of the United Kingdom, although he told the people of Ireland that they should have a parliament in College Green by next June.”

Mr. Stanley then entered at great length into an exposure of the various delusions by which Mr. O’Connell supported popular agitation, and challenged him to bring any one of them to the test of public investigation, before the assembled Commons of Great Britain. This course gave an unusual complexion to the debate: the followers of O’Connell had prepared formidable lists of Irish grievances, for which they said with truth, that coercion would afford no remedy. The ministers and their adherents, for the most part admitted the existence of those grievances, but they averred that the agitation for the repeal of the Union, prevented these grievances from receiving the due consideration which would and ought to be a necessary preliminary to the devising of remedies. It became the object of the Irish members to prevent the question of the Union becoming so prominent in the debate, as to render the division a record of parliamentary opinion on the subject; while, on the other hand, Mr. Macaulay and Mr. Charles Grant (since Lord Glenelg), taunted the Irish for not standing firmly to the principle of repeal, while they professed to be its advocates. In reply to Mr. Sheil, who made a feeble and hesitating speech in support of O’Connell’s views; Mr. Grant said—“The grievances of Ireland are great. I have never denied that fact: I have always admitted it. But how are those grievances to be remedied? The honourable and learned gentleman

(Sheil) says—by returning to the old parliament of Ireland. Now, what are the associations connected with that parliament? What are the feelings with which the heart of every Irishman who has one spark of feeling for his country, beats, when he remembers the old parliament—connected as it was with the misgovernment of centuries, and being as it was at once the instrument, the pander, and the slave of every base and tyrannical administration?

‘Around it flame low objects of desire,
Each purer spark defiled by baser fire.’

Such was the parliament round which the honourable and learned member for Dublin (O’Connell), and his honourable and learned friend the member for Tipperary (Sheil), are now breathing sad funeral strains. Tell us of the anti-commercial code, which it invented—of the anti-Catholic code, which it perfected—of the treaty of Limerick, which it violated—of the penal laws, by which it reduced the Catholics to the condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water—and then tell us that the old parliament of Ireland ought to be revived! I should like to see that parliament returning in procession headed by the two honourable and learned gentlemen, chanting forth their pæans of exultation and triumph, on showing us, in bodily form, that pure parliament which was branded by the burning eloquence of all the foremost and greatest of the patriots Ireland ever produced. There was a moment, to be sure, when the noble genius of Grattan did breathe into that parliament some of his own mighty spirit; but even his inexhaustible fire could not long secure its vestal purity. No; it could not be secure. A few years past, and the boasted and much desired parliament, dissolved and crumbled away in its own rottenness and corruption. And yet, sir, this is the parliament which we are to recall; and this is the parliament that we are to replace in Ireland—great, glorious, and

free, as it would be under the protecting auspices of those honourable and learned gentlemen."

Mr. Grant was unnecessarily severe on Sheil, who thoroughly disapproved of O'Connell's violence of agitation in Ireland, and was far from being pleased with the tone of menace and defiance assumed by that gentleman at the commencement of the debate. As the discussion proceeded, O'Connell himself seemed conscious that his demeanour had too much resembled that of a braggart and a bully; he retracted some expressions, he softened others, and many of his followers were instructed to insinuate that the hostility of O'Connell and "the tail," was more directed against Mr. Stanley personally, than against the general policy of the ministry.

Sir Robert Peel carefully watched the indications of the future combinations of party which were manifested in this debate. It required no great shrewdness to discover that O'Connell and his followers had thoroughly disgusted the great majority of the House, and that their support could not be given to the ministry without greatly damaging its character and influence in England. But at the same time, he saw signs of greater pliability in the repealers than their words seemed to indicate. The very fact of their selecting Mr. Stanley as the chief object of attack, was a pretty clear demonstration of their unwillingness to break with the Whigs altogether; while there were many on the ministerial benches who seemed disposed to conciliate O'Connell, and who hinted at concessions by which his alliance might be obtained.

It was in fact obvious that Stanley was not so firmly supported by his colleagues as he expected to have been; that many members of the cabinet were disposed to grant more of concession, and to use less of coercion, than quite suited the course of policy enunciated by the Irish secretary,

and that consequently the secession of Stanley from the cabinet was an event within a narrow range of probability. On the other hand, it seemed hardly less likely that the Whigs and the repealers would at no distant date have some mutual understanding, equally injurious to the former in England, and the latter in Ireland. Events so far realized this calculation, that the downfall of Whig influence in England must mainly be attributed to the support which the ministers accepted from O'Connell, but in Ireland the great agitator was equally followed by the multitude, whether he denounced or eulogized the Whigs—whether he depicted them as “base, brutal, and bloody,” or hailed them as the only hope for the country.

Sir Robert Peel had thus a most favourable opportunity for making such a profession of political faith in the new parliament, as might supply him with a definite and even a popular standard round which he might rally a party. Stanley was to be elevated as a probable friend, at no distant period ; and O'Connell was to be depreciated as an equally probable ally of the Whig cabinet. The compliment to Stanley was gracefully and earnestly bestowed, with an appearance of candour and generosity which gave it great weight, and its effect was not diminished by its being contrasted with the rather lukewarm tributes of praise which the Irish secretary had obtained from his own colleagues.

“I am afraid,” he said, “of saying what I actually think of the conduct of that right honourable gentleman. Mine, after all, is but the independent testimony of an independent public man ; and I withdraw the eulogy which I would otherwise bestow as his due upon the right honourable gentleman, lest it should increase the number of his enemies. I have heard the right honourable secretary often taunted with his aristocratic bearing and demeanour. I rather think that I should hear less about that, if the right honourable

gentleman were not so powerful a debater in this House. I see the right honourable secretary holding high place in the councils of his Majesty—I recollect the report of last session on Irish tithes, of which he is said to have been the author—I recollect that though he thought that a different distribution of the church property was advisable, to supply increased spiritual instruction to the people of Ireland, he said (at least I remain under the impression that he did say) that he never would consent to the application of the church property of Ireland to any but ecclesiastical purposes connected with the interests of the church. Whether such is still the opinion of the right honourable gentleman, I cannot say; all I know is, that it is my opinion. It may not, perhaps, be that of the majority of this House, but it is my opinion, grounded on the belief that if long possession, and the prescription of more than three centuries, be not powerful enough to protect the property of England from spoliation, there will be little safety for any description of private property, and much less safely for that description of public property which is in the hands of the corporations.” Thus early had Peel anticipated, not merely the probable secession of Stanley from the cabinet, but even the precise question on which he would separate from his colleagues.

The attack on O’Connell was managed with even greater dexterity. “I next,” said he, “approach a subject of very great importance—the Repeal of the Legislative Union; and I admit that on that question I am called upon to pronounce not a qualified, but a positive opinion. I am called upon to state that I am determined, in concurrence with the rest of this House, ‘to support his Majesty in maintaining, as indissolubly connected with the peace, security, and welfare of his Majesty’s dominions, the Legislative Union between the two countries.’ This is the proposition stated in his Majesty’s speech, and I have the alternative of either acced-

ing to it, or of supporting the honourable and learned gentleman, the member for Dublin. That gentleman drew, in his speech, a picture of our defeat, and exulted over it, which, I must say, was, I think, rather ungenerous.

“I feel this subject to be the most important of all; and if I should be led, in discussing it, into the use of unguarded expressions, I trust that the honourable member for Dublin will not imagine I mean him any personal disrespect, but consider they have been used in the warmth of debate. I am called upon, by the address, to make an affirmation which I am perfectly ready to make. A fundamental law is threatened with repeal, and I am required to declare whether I am prepared to maintain it. I am so prepared; and the fair presumption, without any argument, must therefore be, that being a fundamental law, I find myself bound to uphold it. The honourable and learned gentleman, however, calls upon us to agree to an amendment, on account of the expressions contained in this part of the speech. Now I expected that his amendment would at least have brought forward the question upon which he places so much stress, and perhaps it would not have been too much for me to anticipate an elaborate argument in support of his view of it. This would not have been too much, because he has no right to put me upon the defence of the Union between England and Ireland. That is a fundamental compact entered into between the two legislative bodies of the two nations, under which we have legislated for thirty years—under which this reformed House of Commons was constituted—under which we are now actually assembled. Before putting us upon the defence of such a compact, is not the honourable and learned gentleman bound to establish two things? Is he not bound to show, first, that the misgovernment of Ireland has been so great, and that there is such a prospect of its continuance, as to justify the repeal of the Union? and,

second, that in the event of repeal being carried, the two countries can continue in amity under one sovereign, without a prospect of the dismemberment of the empire? Must he not demonstrate that it will at least promote the welfare of Ireland, and will not endanger the security of either kingdom? But what has he done? He has moved that Mr. Bernal do sit in a chair at the table of the House, instead of its being presided over by you, sir. Suppose this to be done, how shall we be any nearer to this object than we now are? How shall we be better able to amend the address in a committee of the whole House? We are the whole House now. What would be gained then? Why, the advantage would be gained, of every member being able to make as many speeches as he pleases. Now I venture to affirm, that in whatever other qualities of legislation we may be found deficient, we shall abound in a disposition to make speeches."

Sir Robert Peel then severely reprobated O'Connell's agitation of the question out of doors, while he avoided bringing it under discussion in the House, and quoted some of the most violent expressions which the great agitator had used in Dublin. O'Connell felt acutely that he was damaged by this exposure, and frequently interrupted Peel; but each interruption only afforded an opportunity for more stinging invectives, and he was forced to endure, in silence, one of the most complete exposures of a delusive agitation ever heard in the senate.

In the conclusion of his speech, Sir Robert Peel took the opportunity of announcing the principles which he had laid down for his guidance in a reformed parliament, and the basis on which he proposed to construct a Conservative party. Some remarkable declarations in this announcement possess historical importance, not only in their reference to the statesman by whom they were made, but in their bearing on the subsequent government of the country.

"It is my duty to support the crown, and the support I give is dictated by principles perfectly independent and disinterested. I have no other views than to preserve law, order, property, and morality. *In the course I pursue this night, is to be found an indication of the course I mean to take on every other occasion* where such matters and such questions may be submitted for our consideration. Let it not be said that I take this course from any desire to recover office. *I feel that between me and office there is a wider gulf than there is perhaps between it and any other man in the House.* I have no desire to replace the honourable gentlemen opposite,—I have wished to give them my support from increased confidence in them as public men; but I regret to say that I am unable to do so. I give them my support on public grounds as ministers of the crown, who want it. I mean no disrespect to the House, but I think, as I have thought from the beginning, *the great change which has been made in its constitution, required a change in the conduct of the public men who were disposed to agree with me in politics*; and all that I have seen of this House has tended to confirm that opinion.

"When the House of Commons was divided between two great parties—one of them in power and the other not, but confident in its principles—it was natural and right that they should adopt those tactics which might have the effect of displacing their opponents. Motions that might seem to strangers merely brought forward for the purposes of annoyance, were justifiable, as having ultimate triumph over the adverse party for their object. But circumstances have now changed, and *I do not feel myself at liberty, holding the opinions that I do, now to resort to what may have been the necessary and legitimate tactics of party.* When I see the government disposed to maintain the rights of property, the authority of law, and, in a qualified sense, the established

order of things against rash innovation, I shall, without regard to party feeling, deem it my duty to range myself on their side. I conceive this to be a paramount obligation, not, as I said before, from any confidence I have in those who guide the vessel of the state, but because I think it right to throw any little weight I may possess into that side of it, when from the pressure of opposite opinions it seems most to be required. I will freely own, that I fear the tendency of this House is to presume too much that everything established is wrong. I do not doubt the intentions of the majority of this House; but I am apprehensive that they have taken their seats under the impression that the institutions under which they have hitherto lived are grievances that must be abated; and that they entertain too strong a presumption on behalf of our own means of curing them.

“Let gentlemen only look to the order-book—let them only examine the notices which have been already given, and consider the expectations which have been universally excited. For my own part, I have done so, and I believe that three months will not pass away without the disappointment of these expectations; it is utterly impossible that they can be fulfilled. Gentlemen may depend upon it that the state of England has not been what they have supposed it to be. If there be grievances, they ought to be obviated; but I doubt the power of the legislature to apply an efficient remedy to all those I hear brought forward. When I say this, I do not admit the justice of those taunts which represent the party with whom I have the honour to act as adverse to all reform: I deny it. I deny again that you can apply to me the term ‘conformer,’ for *I have not altered my views upon reform*. I opposed your plan of parliamentary reform, because I had a strong confidence in the disposition of the House as constituted at that time, to consider all useful and safe reforms in our institutions; but I utterly deny that

I have been, at any time, an enemy to gradual and safe reforms. . . .

"I have heard, with satisfaction, from his Majesty's government, that although they are determined to redress real grievances, they are also resolved to stand by the constitution of the House of Commons as it now exists, and to resist any experiment which can tend to unsettle the public mind. In this resolve I am determined to support them. When we talk of improving the condition of the lower classes of society, we must recollect that we can only maintain industry and order by inspiring those in possession of property with confidence; for, without that, capital will not be applied to any useful object; and the labouring classes—for I will not say the lower—must suffer more for want of employment, than they could possibly benefit if the whole property of the rich were confiscated to their use. I feel so satisfied of this, and so alarmed at the idea of creating apprehension in the minds of capitalists, that, although *without the slightest intention of returning to office*, but believing it would be a public misfortune in the present crisis of the country, that the hands of the government should be weak, it is my determination to strengthen them as much as possible. I know that the country can only be governed through the House of Commons; and I feel that my opinions are not in accordance with those which are supposed to influence the majority of this House; and having, on the other hand, no disposition to conform to their's, I shall, consulting public utility alone, support the government upon grounds as independent as those of men boasting of the most liberal opinions, or returned by the largest constituencies of England."

We have italicized some of the most remarkable passages in this memorable declaration. "The great gulf," which Sir Robert described as interposed between himself and office, was the then unhealed breach which the measure of

1829 had made in the Tory party. Many at that time thought with Croker, that the constitution, as they understood it, was at an end, and that it would be the part of wisdom to abstain from taking any active part in public affairs. Others believed that they ought to maintain their old creed and original principles, in all their former vigour, and occupy the same ground which they held in the days of Pitt and Percival. Even of those who agreed with Peel that something should be yielded to the altered circumstances and changed opinions of the age, there were few who could agree on the nature and amount of the concessions expedient to be made. Peel therefore did not see any immediate prospect of commanding admission to office as the head of a party, and he was not the man to hold any amount of power, whether small or great, on such a tenure as the mere sufferance of the Whigs.

The generous system of tactics which he professed himself ready to adopt, was in fact the only course possible for him in the existing state of parties. Had he resorted to what he called "the necessary and legitimate tactics of party" under the old constitution, he would have only exhibited the numerical weakness of his followers, and aided in breaking down their spirits by repeated defeats. By keeping them together, and at the same time never exhibiting them in a distinct form, he left his adversaries in doubt as to the exact amount of the forces which he had at his command, and thus rendered them very reluctant to court that collision which it was his obvious policy to avoid. At a later period, when a new election made such an addition to the Conservative ranks as established a pretty even balance of parties, Peel showed little scruple in using the old "necessary and legitimate tactics" of party; while his followers, if not encouraged, at least unreprieved, used the most unfair artifices and tactics not merely of party but of faction. There was an obvious

bidding for popularity in the ingenious excuse he made for opposing parliamentary reform; he declared that he did so because the House of Commons under the old constitution was as favourable to safe reforms as it was when the constituencies were enlarged. It followed therefore that he opposed special reform merely from his love for general reform, and consequently that he was not bound by such opposition to resist further progress. The protest that he had not "the slightest intention of returning to office" was rather suspicious; a man cannot be said to have no intention of doing anything, which under existing circumstances it is impossible for him to accomplish.

From the tone of the debate it was obvious that there were two great parties among the supporters of ministers, whose latent differences were in a process of rapid development. The one was resolved to treat Irish agitation and disturbance with a high hand, to vindicate the insulted majesty of the law, and to insist upon submission as an essential preliminary to concession. The other, convinced that Ireland laboured under many real grievances, and that great allowances should be made for the exasperated feelings which these had produced, were disposed to make large and liberal advances in conciliation. There were many shades of difference between the two extremes; at one end we may place those who were resolved to maintain the ascendancy of the Established Church, and at the other, those who were not disinclined to capitulate with O'Connell. But this capitulation was rendered most difficult and dangerous by the extreme violence of O'Connell and his followers; in his case, indeed, the violence was to some extent redeemed by his vigorous eloquence, but it was rendered perfectly disgusting when repeated in the vulgar and ignorant platitudes which distinguished the rhetoric of some members of "the tail."

The next most important question discussed was the con-

dition of the Church of Ireland. Lord Althorpe introduced a measure by which ten Irish bishoprics were to be suppressed, the incomes of some others reduced, and the revenues thus saved to be applied to the purposes for which church-rates were usually levied. It was further proposed, that the clergy should pay a graduated income-tax instead of first-fruits, and that bishops' lands should be leased in perpetuity. Mr. O'Connell, his Irish supporters, and the English liberals, received this proposal with loud applause; indeed it was opposed only by Sir Robert H. Inglis and Mr. Goulburne. Sir Robert Peel, though he supported the ministerial measure, indicated the point of ministerial weakness—its avoidance of determining whether a surplus of church property might be applied to secular purposes, or whether it should be wholly reserved for ecclesiastical uses. He saw that this indecision must have resulted from a difference of opinion in the cabinet, and he hasted therefore to propose himself as the ally of the party prepared to resist any secularization of ecclesiastical revenues. "If ever there was a time," he said, "when the government should have led the public mind by pronouncing a decided opinion upon principle, it is the present. What the noble lord therefore considers the chief beauty of his plan, I regard as its chief defect. Though I agree with the noble lord in wishing to abolish the charge of vestry cess; though I think that no arrangement can be valuable, which does not include the abolition of that obnoxious tax; though I think that the distribution of church property ought to be made solely for the purposes of the church; for compelling the residence of the clergy in those districts in which they have not hitherto resided, and thus extending to the poor Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, the advantage of having a friend and neighbour to apply to in the person of a resident Protestant clergyman;—though I agree with the noble lord upon these points, there are still many others

connected with his proposition on which I totally differ from him. *I think it necessary that the noble lord should have told the House, he was ready to stand by the principle which the right hon. Secretary for Ireland declared he should act upon*—a principle which is necessary for the preservation of all property, corporate or individual—namely, that while all abuses are reformed, and all causes of complaint removed, the property of the Church of Ireland, though received by different hands, and subject to a different distribution, shall still be kept inviolate, and applied solely to purposes connected with the church. It is because the noble lord has not made that declaration—because he has left the public mind in doubt and uncertainty as to the opinions of government—because he has not proclaimed to the nation that he will stand by that principle; but on the contrary, has almost led the House to think that *a difference of opinion exists among his colleagues with respect to that principle*—that I foresee that great evils will result from this plan. To the whole of the plan of his Majesty's government I shall give the most serious consideration. Granting, however, that the general plan may be for the encouragement of the interests of true religion in Ireland, and for the extinction of difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant population there, there is one part of the speech of the noble lord, in which I confess I do not concur. The noble lord, in the passage to which I allude, implied, that there were no fixed principles on which ministers intended to proceed as to the future application of the revenues of the church. Indeed, I should infer from what he said, that there was some difference of opinion between himself and his colleagues on this subject—that great expectations are to be formed of the result of this arrangement; and that by future parliaments, such an arrangement, without any further specification of it at present, may be applied to very different purposes. To that

part of the plan, or rather, that omission in the plan, I decidedly object, considering as I do, that it is fraught with permanent evil consequences.

Mr. Stanley replied to Sir Robert Peel, and tacitly admitted that there was some difference in the cabinet on the question of the appropriation of surplus ecclesiastical revenues, but at the same time he insisted strongly both on the conservative and also liberal spirit in which the measure was conceived. In conclusion, he made a glowing declaration of his feelings towards Ireland, which if received in the same spirit as it had been uttered, might have become the pledge of social tranquillity to the United Empire.

"I may," he said, "have laid myself open to misrepresentation ; I may feel slightly disappointed, and I may have exposed myself to ill-will ; but this I declare, solemnly, that I do not entertain one angry feeling towards any human being, who may have felt it to be his duty to cross my path in the performance of the important trust confided to my care. I have been charged with indifference by the one party and the other. Be it so. I have endeavoured to lend myself to no party, but to discharge my duty honestly and conscientiously. If, in the performance of that duty, I have failed to effect what I once hoped to succeed in, that failure has not in the smallest degree diminished the warm and anxious feelings which I entertain for the interests of Ireland, nor the steady determination I entertain, so long as I have the honour to hold the office with which I am now intrusted, to devote my best energies and my unremitting exertions to such measures as may seem best calculated to ensure the welfare and promote the happiness of Ireland."

At this crisis, a treaty of peace between the O'Connellites and the ministers, which would have united in one compact body the whole liberal party, might easily have been effected.

It was merely necessary that Earl Grey and Mr. Stanley should meet the leading Irish members in a spirit of frankness, candour, and conciliation ; that ministers should consult with them on their measures, both of coercion and conciliation, and not force both forward in an arrogant tone of contemptuous defiance. It would have been no doubt humiliating to the proud spirits of Grey and Stanley, to have made any advances to O'Connell, especially as they both overrated the stubbornness of the great agitator. Instead of finding him pertinacious in his position and extravagant in his demands, they would have had to deal with as pliable a patriot, and as moderate a politician, as any member in the House. Unfortunately, they would concede nothing to the agitator ; they treated him with haughty contempt, and he retorted with scornful defiance. In the measure for improving the grand-jury system, several errors were introduced, which O'Connell's large experience would have corrected ; and the refusal to communicate with him confidentially on the subject, was an insult to him, and an injury to Ireland.

No person acquainted with the state of Ireland at this period, can deny that some stringent measure of repression was necessary. Between the 1st of January and the end of December, 1832, the number of homicides was 242 ; of robberies, 1179 ; of burglaries, 401 ; of burnings, 568 ; of houghing cattle, 290 ; of serious assaults, 161 ; of riots, 203 ; of illegal rescues, 353 ; of illegal notices, 2094 ; of illegal meetings, 427 ; of injuries to property, 796 ; of attacks on houses, 723 ; of firing, with intent to kill, 328 ; of robbery of arms, 117 ; of administering unlawful oaths, 163 ; of resistance to legal process, 8 ; of turning up land, 20 ; of resistance to tithes, 59 ; taking forcible possession, 2 ; making altogether a total of 9002 crimes committed in one year ; and all of these crimes arising from the insurrectionary

state of the country. To prohibit meetings for agitation under such circumstances, was a course of obvious necessity ; to enforce the provisions of a more stringent insurrection-act than had been ever before introduced, might have been endured, but assuredly the bounds of moderation were passed, when Earl Grey proposed the almost total suspension of the constitution, and the establishment of courts-martial to try civil offences.

The coercion bill passed the Lords with little difficulty ; but on the threshold of the Commons, O'Connell met it with a demand for a call of the House, and then followed a debate of extraordinary violence and duration, on the unusual stage of the first reading. To a great extent it was a personal encounter between Stanley and O'Connell, fought with great sarcastic dexterity by the secretary, and with all the fervour of his ardent nature by the agitator.

Peel spoke late in the debate ; and in spite of the heats around him, approached the question with the dispassionate calmness of a statesman. He said—

“ Having a deep sense of the value of the time of this House, and seeing how much of it is wasted in useless discussion, I shall, without any attempt at an elaborate preface, proceed at once, briefly, and in the plainest language, to state the course I mean to pursue with respect to this painful measure ; and the grounds upon which my resolution has been formed. I came down to the House, on the first night of the debate, with a strong impression, founded on the general notoriety of facts which have not been denied, that some measure in aid of the ordinary operation of the law, was absolutely necessary for the protection of life and property, and the preservation of order in Ireland. I have since heard from two ministers of the crown a detail of atrocities, the recital of which makes the blood run cold. Is this detail correct ? Have these murders—these burnings

—these various atrocious crimes been committed? We may differ as to the conclusion to be drawn from the premises; we may differ as to the remedy to be applied; but do we agree as to the state of facts, and as to the existence and character of this evil? Up to this hour I have heard no denial of the truth of the statements that have been made. There appears on all sides an admission that the condition of society in many parts of Ireland is most alarming—that the worst crimes have been committed with impunity. Some attribute this state of things to the remissness of government; others think the spirit of disturbance might be suppressed by the vigorous exertion of existing laws; but no one has impeached the accuracy of those statements which have been made to the House on official authority. To that authority, I can, of course, add nothing. If the details of crime already given be thought imperfect, I cannot supply the deficiency; but I find on the records of this House, some recent testimonies as to the moral and social condition of certain parts of Ireland, which completely confirm my own previous impressions, and warrant the inferences which have been probably drawn from the recital of individual acts of outrage. As I before observed, the first point to be ascertained is—whether we are agreed as to facts. As the foundation of my argument, and in aid of the uncontradicted evidence already offered to us, I beg to quote the testimonies I have before referred to; they will be found in the Appendix to a Report on the state of the Queen's County, which was presented at the close of last session."

He then entered into a minute and fearful detail of the atrocities which had been committed. Great as were the crimes, they were aggravated by circumstances of needless cruelty and barbarity, such as would not have been perpetrated by the savages of New Zealand. But there was one testimony adduced, which ought to have been decisive, that

of the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle, Roman Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, a patriot who would have done honour to any country, and a prelate who would have reflected credit on any church. "For several months past," said this venerated prelate, "we have witnessed with the deepest affliction of spirit, the progress of illegal combinations, under the barbarous designations of Whitefeet and Blackfeet, within certain portions of these dioceses. We have laboured by letter and by word; by private admonition, and by public reproof, proceeding from ourselves and our clergy—to arrest and suppress this iniquity; but the tares which the enemy of man has in the night-time sown in the field of the church, have grown up in despite of our watchfulness. Murders, blasphemies, perjuries, rash swearing, robberies, assaults on persons and property, *the usurpation of the powers of the state*, and of the rights of the peaceable and well-disposed, are multiplied, and every day perpetrated at the instigation of the devil, by the wicked and deluded men engaged in these confederacies." Having quoted this striking testimony, the more powerful because it came from one whose eminent character commanded the respect of all parties in the House, and whose authority O'Connell himself could not gainsay, Sir Robert Peel thus continued:—

"Such is the outline of the state of crime in one considerable district of Ireland, traced by the faithful pencil of a Roman Catholic priest, a Roman Catholic bishop, and a judge of the land. Will any one assert that the picture is overcharged? If it be not—if there be no exaggeration, no overcolouring of the melancholy facts—will it be maintained that ordinary remedies will suffice for the cure of this admitted and alarming evil? If the statement of facts be not denied, and if the existing law be not sufficient, then I feel warranted in giving my assent to the first reading of this bill—that is, in fact, to the introduction of the measure,

with a view to its future consideration in detail. Into that detail I will not now enter; not that I would shrink from doing so, if this were the fit occasion; but let me assure those who are for the first time members of this House, that the established rules and orders of our proceedings, which allot different stages of the same bill for different discussions—one for the principle, another for the details—are well calculated, if duly observed, to promote the fair collision of opinion, and to elicit the truth. All that I shall say at present, with respect to the details of the bill, is briefly this, that although I will not now pledge myself to their adoption without modification, yet I will not consent to fritter away the general efficacy of the measure, by encumbering the powers which it confers by various restrictions and qualifications.”

After severely reprobating the artifices used to support agitation, and indirectly accusing O’Connell of instigating the passions of the populace for selfish objects, Sir Robert Peel thus concluded one of the most effective speeches he ever delivered in the House of Commons:—

“I have attempted to refute some of the objections urged against this measure; but the truth is, it is here, it is in this bloody catalogue of crime, that the true answer to these objections lies:—196 murders and murderous attempts; 194 burnings; 1827 burglaries, and attacks on houses! Can you deny these facts; and if you cannot, where is your answer to the argument drawn from them? It is too powerful, not to be repeated. Above 2,200 acts of insurrectionary violence have been committed in one single year, in one single province. One hundred and ninety-six murders!—Why, you have fought great battles, and achieved famous victories, at a less cost of English blood! [An honourable member: No, no!] No! but I say emphatically, Yes. The battle of St. Vincent cost you less. The terrible bombard-

ment of Algiers cost you less. With less profusion of English blood you rolled back the fiery tide which the exulting valour of France poured upon the heights of Busaco. But why do I talk of battles?—Oh, how tame and feeble the comparison between death on the field of honour, and that death which is inflicted by the hand of Irish assassins. It is not the fatal hour of that death, that is most terrible; it is the wasting misery of suspense, the agony of expectation, that is listening for weeks and months to every nightly sound, lest it be the fatal knell to summon a whole family to destruction. These are the real terrors, from which the act of murder is but too often a merciful relief. In Ireland they can afford to give you notice of death; and wo to the victim that receives that notice, and neglects it! In England, who is there that has mixed in public life, and has not received some anonymous warning, or threat of personal injury, and having received it, does not treat it either as a malignant jest, or an empty menace, which proves that from one quarter, at least, he is in no danger? But in Ireland, these warnings are given in sober earnestness. They are the preliminary tortures, the refinements of cruelty, which imbitter the pangs of death. These, sir, may appear slight things, but they are in truth the colours that paint the state of society more vividly than volumes of laboured disquisitions.

“There never was a tale of fictitious horror that equalled the romance that, in that state of society, real life has presented. There never was a creative fancy that could figure to itself a state of misery more terrible than that which has been, and now is, endured by many a family in Ireland; or could portray, from imagination alone, such examples of heroic fortitude, of sublime composure in the very jaws of death, as have been exhibited by illiterate and wretched peasants. There you may find the gauge and

measure of the load of agony which the human spirit, after repeated trials, can endure, without fainting under the pressure.

“I am still haunted by the recollection of the scenes of atrocity and suffering with which I was once familiar. Will the House bear with me, while I mention one fact to prove the truth of what I say, both as to the misery that is endured, and as to the fortitude that is exhibited? It occurred long ago, but it was then no rare occurrence, and it is less so now.

“There was a family in the county of Kilkenny, consisting of a father, mother, and three children; the eldest child, a girl about nine years of age. The father had made himself obnoxious by giving evidence against some persons charged with Whiteboy offences, who were, I believe, tried and executed. He was forced to leave the country; he came to Dublin: but the desire to return to his native spot overcame his fears, and he was resolved to brave the danger. It was in vain to expostulate with him: all he asked was, that he might be allowed to return to his house, and that his house might be slated. Perhaps some English members are not aware of the object of this request, and do not see the great difference, in point of security, between a thatched and a slated house. Here again, is one of the slight, almost imperceptible circumstances, that are unerring indications of the state of society. The house is slated as a means of additional defence, to prevent the murderers, who may try to force an entrance through the door or window, from setting fire to the roof in case of failure. The man returned to his home, took possession of his house, received a notice to leave it, and a threat of murder if he did not; but he still resisted all importunity to him to come to a place of safety, and remained with his family some weeks without being attacked, long enough to relax his vigilance. One night his house was

surrounded either by eleven or nine men (I forget which at this moment). He was asleep in bed with his wife and children. They broke into the house, dragged the man just outside the door, and murdered him in the most horrid manner, with pitchforks, in the hearing and almost in the sight of his wife and children. Now, let the House mark what I am about to relate. While the husband was in the struggles of death, the mother took her child—the child of nine years of age;—placed it in a recess that was close to the fireplace;—and, such was the heroic fortitude of that woman, such her awful composure, while the cries of her dying husband were ringing in her ears, that she said to her child: ‘Those are the cries of your dying father. I shall be the next victim. After they have murdered him, they will murder me: but I will not go out when they call me; I will struggle with them to the last, that I may give you time to do that for which I put you here. My last act will be to throw this dry turf on the hearth; and do you, by the glare of it, watch the faces of the murderers, mark them all narrowly, that you may be able to tell who they are, and to revenge the death of your father and your mother.’

“As the unhappy woman foretold, so it fell out. She was summoned, but she did not go forth. After a struggle with her murderers, she was dragged out of the house, and she was actually slain on the bleeding body of her husband. The child obeyed her dying command—watched, by the lighted turf, the faces and every motion of the assassins; and upon the artless evidence of that child, which nothing could shake, five of those assassins were convicted, and hanged! Such are the romances of real life!

“Alas! in that state of society in which such things take place, it is not merely that laws are powerless; all the moral restraints and checks on crime appear to have lost their force. Those feelings of pity, those compunctious visitings of nature,

which, in other times, have given protection, at least, to the helplessness of age and infancy, are extinct. There is no remorse. The conscience,—‘which makes cowards of us all,’—inflicts no secret punishment on the murderer whom the law has spared. Those superstitious terrors, those salutary and almost instinctive prejudices that impress the mind with a belief that murder cannot escape detection, are obliterated. The mighty genius that dived deepest into the recesses of the human heart, and laid bare the springs of human action, never imagined the total extinction of pity and remorse. When he painted the murderer, he painted him haunted by the recollection of his crime, and driven to distraction by the phantoms that pursued him:—

. . . . ‘Blood will have blood, they say ;
Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak ;
Auguries and understood relations have brought forth
The secret’st man of blood.’

“In Ireland the man of blood is not secret ; and neither the law of his country, nor his own conscience, have any terrors for him.

“In this state of things, then, there being no adequate punishment inflicted by the ordinary operation of law, and the force of moral restraints on crime being almost extinguished, shall we reject at once this measure as unworthy of consideration? You are asked how this measure can supply the defect of evidence. You are told that it is evidence, and evidence only, that is now wanted ; and it is inquired of you, in a tone of triumph, ‘Do you mean to convict, without the proofs of guilt? and, if not, how do you mean to procure those proofs?’ I answer,—By restoring confidence. Range yourselves on the side of order ; lend the weight of your authority to the law ; and from that hour you will instil confidence into the peaceable and well-disposed, and strike terror into the coward hearts (for they are cowards) of nightly

assassins. Then will men breathe a new atmosphere ; then will the position of the friends of order and of its enemies be reversed ; and those who suffer will come forth with voluntary testimony to aid the law, which gives them redress for past injury, and protects them from renewed wrong. But if you shrink from your duty—if you pause for a fortnight—if you cover your irresolution under the flimsy veil of requiring further time to consider, then take these consequences :—the contagion of depravity will rapidly extend ; the places yet healthy will be infected ; the whole land will become a moral wilderness, in which every principle of government will be subverted, and every rule of justice reversed ; in which there will be no punishment except for innocence, and no security except for triumphant guilt.”

The debate on the Coercion bill was protracted through several nights, principally by the perseverance of the “member’s tail,” who alternately wearied and amused the House by the recital of the vague grievances and imaginary wrongs which formed the staple of their declamations in Dublin, but which delivered in an enlightened assembly, became equally tiresome and ridiculous. They did not deny that fearful outrages were perpetrated, but they laboured to prove that the crimes of the peasants had no connection whatever with the agitation of the political adventurers, and a few ventured to indulge in a few obscure threats of insurrection, until O’Connell found it necessary to check their indiscretion. The majority for the first reading of the bill may be taken as a fair indication of the state of the public feeling at the time: there appeared for the first reading, 466 ; against it, 89 ; majority, 377.

Viewing the matter with that impartiality which is the natural result of time, it must be confessed that the Coercion bill was equally damaging to the Whig ministry and to O’Connell and his followers. In itself a Coercion bill was a

monstrous exception to Whig policy, and not far from a violation of the promises which they had made when they assumed the government of the country. Even if the distracted state of Ireland furnished some excuse for exceptional measures of repression, the bill as introduced by Earl Grey went far beyond the real necessities of the case; indeed, some of the most obnoxious clauses were withdrawn in the House of Commons, and others were never acted upon when the bill became law. But every one of the clauses thus proved to be unnecessary was viewed as an act of hostility to the Irish people; while their withdrawal, or the allowing of them to remain inoperative, was viewed as evidence of cowardice and imbecility in the government, by the people of England. Injustice no doubt was done to the ministers in both countries, but it is to be lamented that circumstances gave too great an appearance of reality to both charges.

The Irish members suffered still more severely in the little reputation they ever possessed. While they opposed the ministerial measures with great bitterness and little ability, they originated nothing of their own. To resist everything and originate nothing, might, and often does, pass for patriotism in Ireland, but in every other part of the world it would be termed factious incapacity. Some of the party seemed to have a glimmering sense of the real nature of their position, and made some feeble attempts to assert independence, but these were at once checked by O'Connell as acts of insubordination, and the Irish members continued to be regarded as the mere servile followers of a leader who talked by the hour of the grievances of his country, but could never spare a moment to devise a practical remedy.

It was soon seen by those who watched the course of public events, that a large body of the mercantile and moneyed interests had begun to look to Sir Robert Peel as a better man of business than the Whigs, and that he in turn took frequent

opportunities of disavowing his hostility to Reform as a general principle. When a ministerial measure was introduced for abolishing vestry-cess in Ireland—an unjust tax levied by Protestants upon Roman Catholics—and raising the necessary funds for the building and repair of churches by a graduated tax upon Irish livings, though he criticized rather sharply some of the details of the measure, he professed himself on the whole favourable to its principles. The conformity between his sentiments and those of Mr. (since Lord) Stanley, excited some attention at the time; and there was certainly between them this bond of union, that both were hated by O'Connell with an intensity that passed far beyond the limits of political hostility, and that both retorted that hatred with dislike, in which scorn and contempt had obviously a preponderating share. After having urged some plausible objections to the machinery of the ministerial measure, Sir Robert Peel thus spoke of its principles:—

“I admit, that for the sake of Protestantism in Ireland, the Church of Ireland should undergo revision. But it must be done deliberately. Our first task is to do our duty to the Church of Ireland. We may then see what property there will be to tax. At present there is none. For my own part I am bound to say, that I do not think the coronation oath an insuperable barrier to the king's giving his assent to a well-considered measure for the reformation of the Church of Ireland. I have been as active an opponent of the concessions to the Catholics as any one in parliament, but I have never relied on the coronation oath as an obstacle to those concessions. I have never thought that that oath bound the king to maintain the Church, and all its members, in possession of precisely every right and privilege which they may have possessed in 1688. It does bind him to consult all the essential interests of the Church, to provide to the utmost of his power for its security; but it leaves him a dis-

erection to take the course, which in his conscience, he may believe best for those interests and that security. It is a disgraceful fact, that the clergy of Ireland are now subsisting on eleemosynary aid; and if, in such circumstances, the noble lord interferes with existing interests, he will establish a principle which will assuredly be afterward visited upon other property. I hope before to-morrow the noble lord will consider this subject, and make some modification of his resolutions. I appeal to all reformers on this point, and I am sure they will not suffer the principle of Church reform to be degraded and dishonoured by an act of paltry and unprofitable injustice."

Lord Althorpe, the Whig Chancellor of the Exchequer, was a nobleman beloved in private life, and highly respected for his moral qualities in public; but it is doubtful whether his financial talents qualified him to undertake the difficult task of managing the complicated machinery of taxation, especially as his oratorical powers were not of an order calculated to command respect in an unruly House of Commons. Nearly all the liberals declared that they were anxious to keep in the Whigs and keep out the Tories, but at the same time they acted so as to make the seats of the Whigs in the Cabinet anything but beds of roses. At the recent elections they had pledged themselves to reductions of taxation, which, if all the promises made had been fulfilled, would have left the country without a revenue. When the budget was proposed, Lord Althorpe found himself beset by clamorous demands for reductions on all sides, and when he pointed to the condition of the revenue and expenditure as an answer, he was met by vague reproaches of the extravagance of public establishments, and the necessity of diminishing the public burdens. The moneyed interest became alarmed, and they feared that the security of the funds provided for the public creditor would be invaded. It was to this class, ever destined

to be his chief strength, rather than to the House, that he addressed the following remarks on the budget of 1833 :—

“ I think the noble lord has acted wisely in maintaining the system of taxation as it stands at present. All attempts to effect an extensive commutation of taxes, causing, as it necessarily must, in the present artificial state of society, the unsettlement of capital, must be productive of great injury. Another system of taxation might be proved by reason *à priori* to be better than the present ; but the present being established, and the habits and occupations of the people having accommodated themselves to it, it may, though abstractedly less perfect, be, on the whole, preferable to any substitute. I think likewise, that the noble lord has done well in not proposing an Income or Property-tax. Nothing but a case of extreme necessity could justify parliament in subjecting the people of this country, in a time of peace, to the inquisitorial process which must be resorted to in order to render that impost productive ; and to have recourse to such a machinery for the purpose of raising two or three per cent would be most unwise. Such a tax would be a great resource in time of necessity, and therefore I am unwilling, by establishing the offensive inquisition with which it must be accompanied, to create such an odium against it as might render it almost impracticable to resort to in time of extreme distress. The application of the tax to Ireland would be attended with extreme difficulty. I really believe that this circumstance forms the main obstacle to the establishment of the tax. It can hardly be contended, that if a Property-tax were established, Ireland should be exempt from its operation. I wish to see Ireland as much favoured as possible consistently with justice ; but to impose a Property-tax upon England and Scotland, and to exempt Ireland from its operation, would, in my opinion, however unpopular that opinion may be, be exceedingly unjust. In England a Property-tax

would be applied in the way of commutation of other existing taxes, and might thus afford material relief, but Ireland does not afford the materials of a commutation, and the Property-tax in Ireland would operate as a new and additional impost. The noble lord has therefore wisely abstained from agitating a question which could not be satisfactorily settled. With respect to a tax upon property, as distinguished from a tax upon income, I very much doubt whether it would promote the interests of the labouring classes, because it would diminish the funds at present appropriated to the encouragement of industry and the promotion of labour, and it would ultimately be found that the tax did not affect the person who paid it so much as the labourer, by diminishing his means of employment. I approve of the repeal of the tax upon raw cotton, which was imposed in 1831, for though it may not hitherto have injuriously affected the cotton manufacture of this country, though there is no evidence of incipient decay, yet irreparable injury may be done by improvident taxes on the raw materials of our great manufactures without our having any previous warning. A very slight premium given to a foreign rival might turn the current in his favour."

A still more dangerous financial proposal, but one which still finds favour in the Birmingham school of political economy, was made by Mr. Attwood, who proposed a return to the paper and small-note currency. It was on his restoration of a metallic standard, by his bill of 1819, that Peel's fame chiefly rested, and he therefore felt himself peculiarly bound to resist the doctrines of the Attwood school. Their chief argument was, that want of employment arose from insufficient currency, but what their standard is for deciding what amount of currency would be sufficient, they never have explained; neither have they told us how an increase of currency could be distinguished from a depreciation of

currency, with which, according to all ordinary laws of demand and supply, it must absolutely be identified. Sir Robert Peel's masterly exposure of the fallacies of the currency doctors has not lost a particle of its interest at the present day :—

“The House, sir, will probably expect from me, or at least will not be surprised, that I should wish to state my views upon the principal points which are the immediate subject of debate. Such references have been made to the part I personally took, in 1819, in establishing the present system of our currency; the importance of the subject is so great; the interest I feel in it on every ground, public and private, is so overwhelming; that, wearied as the House must be by a debate, dull and tedious from the abstruse and abstract nature of its subject, I yet hope from its indulgence a patient hearing. No doubt, the most important part of the question is the practical one—namely, the consideration of what can be done in the present condition of society for the purpose of relieving the distress alleged to exist; but still I cannot permit to pass without remark, the references which have been made to the Act of 1819. I might pass by those references, if personal feelings were alone concerned. I might submit, in silence, to the imputations of rashness and folly, if the consequence was mere justice to the authors of the measure: but I well know that such injustice is not the single consequence; that if, without contradiction, you can stigmatize the Act of 1819 as an act of confiscation—if you may take for granted that, though possibly well intended, it was, in fact, founded on injustice and injury—I well know that you cannot do this without undermining the foundations of the whole monetary system, and preparing for its total subversion. To avert such an evil, I am prepared to deny the justice of the aspersions cast upon the measure of 1819. Gentlemen who have taken part in this debate, speak of the

promoters of that act as if they were repentant sinners, as if they acknowledged the evil which they had done, and, made wise by experience, bitterly lamented the consequences of their folly. I scorn those vile imputations of base, interested motives which have been thrown out in other places. I know they will not influence the judgment of this House. I have heard none of them within these walls. I would to God that I had ; and that those men who are bold enough, when they have no one present to confute them—who are not sparing of their calumnies and menaces when they are addressing inflammable assemblies of the people—would here, face to face, in presence of the accused, redeem their pledges and repeat their accusations.

“An honourable gentleman, the member for Knaresborough, with intentions, at least, for which I return him my sincere thanks, has been kind enough to throw his protecting shield over me. He said, ‘The bill of 1819 was not Mr. Peel’s bill. Oh, no ! he was an ingenuous young man, ignorant of the subject of currency, performing a task thrown upon him by the ministers, and all the blame belongs to Lord Liverpool.’ Sir, I will not allow the blame, if there be blame, to be transferred to any one, still less to one who is no more. I was not, in 1819, connected with the government ; I had quitted office, and had no desire to return to it. But I was the chairman of the Committee of Inquiry, and I brought in the Act of 1819, in consequence of a conviction, founded upon positive demonstration, that there could be no standard of value except a definite weight of the precious metals ; and that a paper circulation, inconvertible, or resting upon anything but a metallic basis, must be liable to injurious fluctuations, both in amount and value, and exposed to the constant hazard of discredit. In 1819, the question came before the House for final decision. In my opinion, that question was the choice between two alternatives—

either bank restriction, or the return to cash payments without further delay. Gentlemen now speak, as if no evils had been suffered before 1819. They assume that the Act of 1819 was brought in without experience of past embarrassment, without the pressure of any actual evil, without any expectation or demand on the part of the public; and the honourable member for Knaresborough is simple enough to think, that the House of Commons was, on a sudden, deluded by a speech which the honourable gentleman himself heard, and which he describes as void of all matter—of all reasoning—but which very strongly reminded him of the harp of Orpheus. The harp of Orpheus! Does the honourable gentleman really think that Orpheus would have chosen, for the subject of his lyre, the Bullion Report? or that having chosen it, and having poured forth a melody with soft tones, but ‘without matter,’ or the ‘shadow of an argument,’ he would have been able to cajole the simple understanding of city merchants, and to soften the flinty hearts of bank directors;

‘*Mulcentemque Tigres, et agentem carmine quercus.*’

What a notion, that the House of Commons was taken by surprise on the currency question in the year 1819! that the restoration of the metallic standard was heard of for the first time in 1819! Why, the Bullion Report had been made in 1810, that is, nine years before, and had provoked a pamphlet from almost every man that could write. When Mr. Horner proposed, in 1811, among other resolutions, that cash payments should be resumed within two years of that date, that resolution was negatived, and other resolutions, proposed by Mr. Vansittart, were adopted. But did these latter resolutions sanction the doctrine, that cash payments must never be resumed? Did they intimate that the public creditor must be repaid in depreciated currency? No such thing. Among these resolutions of Mr. Vansittart, was one expressly

recording it as the opinion of the House, that it was expedient that, at the earliest period compatible with the public safety, the bank should resume its payments in coin at the ancient standard of value. Peace arrived in 1814; and what course did parliament pursue? It distinctly recognized the claim of the public creditor to payment in coin, and limited the further restriction on the bank to one year. In 1815, war again broke out, and the battle of Waterloo was fought. The restriction was continued, but was again limited to one year. The year 1816 came, and it was found necessary to continue the restriction for a further period of two years; but in the preamble of the continuing bill, there was admitted, by universal consent, a distinct recognition that the bank ought to prepare for the immediate resumption of cash payments; 1818 arrived, and there was again an almost unanimous expression of opinion in parliament, that the time had arrived when the ancient standard must be restored, no one then doubting the claims of the public creditor, in point of justice, or denying the general policy of returning to cash payments. Another postponement, however, took place, limited to a year; but in 1819, the House became weary of these continued delays, and a committee was appointed, mainly on the suggestion, and at the instance, of Mr. Tierney, to inquire into the whole subject, and the best mode of insuring the resumption of cash payments. As I have already said, I was not in office, but I was selected as chairman of that committee, and I presented its report to the House. The substance of it was, that at the end of four years from its date, cash payments, according to the ancient standard, must be resumed; but that the resumption should be effected by gradual steps, assuming the actual market-price of gold, at the time, as the preparatory and provisional standard. I ask the House this question—If cash payments were ever to be resumed, had not the time then arrived? Four years had elapsed since

the peace, when the inquiry was commenced ; and if we had then deferred the actual resumption to a later period than 1823—that is, for more than eight years after the conclusion of peace—do you think it ever would have taken place at all? that the bank, or the public, would have believed that we were in earnest? I greatly doubt whether the old doctrines about paper and gold are not still maintained ; whether there are not many of those whom I am now addressing, who dream of inconvertible paper, or of some other foundation for paper currency, than a metallic basis. [No, no !] I rejoice to hear the denial ; but this I know, that many of the arguments urged by those who vote for the committee, apply with as much force to the adoption of any determinate, unvarying, metallic standard, as to the ancient standard.”

The honourable baronet then applied himself to the question of depreciation, which he demonstrated would be the inevitable effect of Mr. Attwood’s proposal, and he pointed out, with equal clearness and power, the fatal effects of such depreciation on all the monetary and commercial transactions of the country. Even an inquiry before a committee, he showed, would so derange men’s minds, that all the markets through the country, and all mercantile contracts, including the arrangements for the wages of labour would be thrown into confusion. In conclusion, he said,

“Sir, I shall now conclude. The subject is far from exhausted—but there are limits to the patience of the House. Before I sit down, let me make an earnest appeal to those whom I address, to weigh well the consequences of the vote they may give. If they foresee, that injustice will be done by the unsettlement of the contracts of twenty years—that confusion will arise—that commercial dealings will be paralyzed by doubts as to the future value of the currency ;—above all, if they see cause to apprehend that the wages of labour will not rise in any corresponding ratio with the rise of

prices, and that, therefore, the condition of the labourer will be depressed—let them reject the plausible appeal, ‘that distress ought to be inquired into,’ and refuse to do a great public wrong, though it be covered with a specious veil. I say, respectfully but firmly, that this is the manly course—this, the true fulfilment of a high and sacred trust. Doubtless much consideration is due to the feelings and wishes of your constituents. To them you owe—as was truly said by that illustrious man, who, in comprehensive and philosophic views of all public affairs, and of the great principles of social government, surpassed all the statesmen who preceded him or who have followed—as much as some of them may have exceeded him, in the practical application of official knowledge and experience—‘to them you owe,’ says Mr. Burke, ‘the sacrifice of your time, and your pleasures, and your repose. But to them you do not owe the sacrifice, in the weightiest matters, of your mature and conscientious judgment.’ ‘That judgment is not their property, and you abandon the first of duties, if in deference to the wishes, you consent to sacrifice the interest, of your constituents.’

“For what is it, sir, that we are sent here? For what is it that we are placed on the mountain-top, but that we may embrace a wider horizon within our view, and penetrate farther than those on the plain, through the mists and darkness which hang upon the future. Perform your duty—show that you are not engaged in a mere ‘scuffling local agency,’—that you are fit to be entrusted with the destinies of an empire; and you will find your reward—my belief is, in the applause of your constituents—but, unquestionably, in the approbation of your own consciences. If you suffer, you will suffer in a noble cause, and you will be repaid with ample interest, of honour and reputation, for any temporary loss of favour. Read the controversy between Mr. Burke and his constituents in 1780, and judge of your reward by

your own admiration of the rejected candidate. They told him, 'that his impolitic stubbornness would cost him his seat.' If you hear the same language, be prepared with his dignified reply—'I wished to be a member of parliament, to have my share of doing good and resisting evil.' 'I deceive myself most grossly, if I would not much rather pass the remainder of my life hidden in the recesses of the deepest obscurity, feeding my mind even with the visions and imaginations of such things, than to be placed on the most splendid throne of the universe, tantalized with a denial of the practice of all which can make the greatest situation any other than the greatest curse.'

"He stood before his constituents accused of no venality—of no neglect of duty—of no sacrifice of their interests to his ambition, or to their own hasty and inconsiderate views. The accusation against him was, that he had preferred to their wishes the dictates of his own humane, deliberate, enlightened judgment, and the true interests of the constituents themselves. Follow his example, and you may truly say with him if you are obnoxious to a similar charge, 'In every accident which may happen through life—in pain, in sorrow, in depression and distress—I will call to mind this accusation, and be comforted.'

"But my conviction is, a different fate is reserved for you—that juster views are now taken of the duties which you are called upon to fulfil, and that the true way to secure the applause and lasting confidence of your constituents, is to claim, for yourselves and for them, the right to abide, in high matters like this, by the dictates of your own deliberate conviction."

The course recommended by Sir Robert Peel and the Whig ministers, was affirmed by a majority of 304 to 49. Then and now this was regarded as a victory won by Sir Robert Peel, rather than by the cabinet. The Whigs took

an active part in the debate; they discussed the question with great skill and accuracy, but their greatest admirers were forced to confess that no one in the House exhibited such thorough mastery of the subject, and so intimate an acquaintance with the most complicated and minute details of financial and monetary affairs, as the right honourable baronet. He had soon another favourable opportunity of strengthening his claims to the confidence of the moderate portion of the community, beginning to be alarmed at the extent of change already made, and the greater amount still demanded.

Whether vote by ballot be desirable or not, it was hardly prudent to demand such a change in the first session of a parliament, which was itself the result of an experiment. Mr. Grote's motion scared the timid reformers, and the arguments O'Connell used in its support, completed their dislike to the change. It was chiefly against O'Connell, that Peel aimed his powerful reply; from which we extract less than we could desire. He said—

“Though the honourable and learned member for Dublin has not made a long speech, yet as it is well known that he has paid much attention to the subject, his powerful mind would have suggested stronger arguments in favour of the question before us, if stronger were to be urged. I shall briefly review the reasoning of the honourable and learned gentleman in favour of the Vote by Ballot, confident that the learned gentleman has omitted nothing which could really be relied on as an argument in its behalf. One of the effects which the learned member expects from the ballot is, that it would put an end to canvassing. Does the learned gentleman consider that an improvement? Does he think it an improvement, that after a man has been toiling for years in the service of his constituents, they should receive him with a dead languor and apathy, or

that he should return among them with the same feeling? Does he consider it an improvement, that a member should not have an opportunity of explaining his conduct to his constituents, or of asking them for a renewal of their confidence? For my own part, far from thinking that an improvement, I should consider it to be destructive of one of the strongest links between the represented and their representatives—one of the best securities for an honest discharge of their respective trusts. It would debar the constituents from a personal acquaintance with their representatives, and it would deprive the representative of the opportunity of mixing with the humbler classes of his constituents, of ascertaining their wants and wishes, and asking their support upon public grounds. If a man of wealth, station, and character, were thus relieved from the necessity of canvassing; in other words, of all personal and individual communication with his constituents—if he is only to appear before them on a stated day, amid all the confusion of public ceremony, I for one should consider this boasted effect of the ballot as anything but a recommendation. The honourable and learned member has admitted, that the ballot is nothing without secrecy. Now, I doubt whether it is possible to prevent the public functionaries employed in the elections from knowing how a man votes, and thus obtaining a great degree of influence over many men who would dread that the manner in which they voted should be known. These functionaries would, in fact, become intolerable petty tyrants. In order that secrecy should be maintained, the machinery must be so complete, that the functionaries should remain as ignorant of the nature of a man's vote as any other person. All will allow, that if vote by ballot were introduced, secrecy is indispensable in any chance of its successful operation. But does the honourable and learned member think that the voters themselves would permanently conceal their votes?

Could they, in the course of gossip with their neighbours, conceal them? Is it possible that a man could conceal it from his wife? Where then would be the secrecy? But suppose the secret inviolably kept—that never, in any moment of conviviality or friendship, of confidential intercourse with a friend or relative—the voter at a contested election divulges the vote he gives—what an abominable system must that be, under which persons could not discuss with their nearest connections, how he fulfilled, or meant to fulfil, a public trust! Could it be expected that men, in their private societies, in their families, are not to mention that which is probably uppermost in the minds of all. If strict silence is to be observed, vote by ballot will do more than put an end to public canvass—it will stop public discussion. The honourable and learned member says, that under the present system, landlords could be tyrants; but does the system which he advocates, not lay the tenantry open to a greater degree of tyranny? Would not the landlords, supposing their power to remain the same, and secrecy to be impracticable, wreak a double vengeance upon those who both disobeyed and deceived them? The honourable and learned gentleman says, that the ballot would prevent bribery; but if the disposition to bribe and to be bribed, existed, it would have ingenuity enough to defeat their paper regulations against it? The learned gentleman says, Even if you fail in preventing bribery, you will have done no harm—the law will be inoperative, but no mischief will have been done. But I must contend that every inoperative law is in itself mischievous. No clubs would be formed, but a more systematic and more extensive system of bribery would be carried on. It throws discredit upon the law, to legislate only to fail. If vote by ballot is only a delusive security against bribery, it is worse than no security at all, for it would prevent other and more effectual precautions.

The honourable and learned member has spoken of the delight of seeing a landlord, with his tenantry encompassing him, going to give their votes in his favour, from a real and conscientious preference, founded on gratitude and respect. If the sight be so delightful, why deprive them of it? I object to the ballot, because it would make the House more democratic than it is already, and I think it democratic enough. I say so openly. I do not wish to conceal that I think the House of Commons as democratic as is consistent with the principles of the constitution, and with the maintenance of the just authority and undoubted privileges of the other branches of the legislature. It has been said, that the ballot would destroy the influence of property. I will confidently assert, that if the influence of property in elections were destroyed, the security of all property and the stability of all government, would be destroyed with it. It is surely absurd to say, that a man with ten thousand pounds a year, should not have more influence over the legislature of the country, than a man of ten pounds a year. Yet each is only entitled to a single vote. How could this injustice, this glaring inequality, be practically redressed excepting by the exercise of influence? How could the government end but in a democracy, if the influence were merely according to numbers? An additional reason for opposing the motion of the honourable member is, that after the change made in the electoral system last year, another not less extensive change in the system would be most unwise. What! is there never to be any fixedness in the electoral system? Are we to give no opportunity of judging the effect of the change already made? Until there is a strong proof of some practical defect in the system as it at present stands, I shall object to a change. By a continual series of experiments on the institutions of government, we are depriving ourselves of one of the main-stays of

government, one of the chief sources of legitimate power—respect for, and attachment to, that which is established; and upon this ground alone I will oppose the motion. I think universal suffrage more plausible than vote by ballot. But if we are to admit vote by ballot, it will only be the prelude to further demands; and there is nothing to hinder any member from coming forward the following day to ask us to adopt universal suffrage, or any other plan which may be popular. There is no system which has not plausible arguments in favour of its adoption, and certainly the theoretical arguments in favour of universal suffrage are at least as strong as those in favour of the ballot. There are arguments in favour of extending the franchise to women, to which it would be no easy matter to find any logical answer. Other and more important duties are entrusted to women; women are allowed to hold property, to vote on many occasions in right of that property—nay, a woman may inherit the throne, and perform all the functions of the first office of the state; why should they not vote for a member of parliament? I object to the motion on another ground—namely, that many have been induced to yield their consent to the change effected in the electoral system of the country last year, under a clear understanding that it was to have a fair trial. I will take leave to tell honourable members, that they would do more good to the country, and be more useful representatives for their constituents, if they devoted some of the time consumed in discussions on the form of government under which they are to live, in reading the report of the poor-law commissioners, in considering the facts, and in applying themselves to remedy some of the practical and growing evils which it brings to light. On these grounds, and believing that it is necessary for the welfare of the country, that the state of excitement and desire for change in which the people

are, should be allayed, I will vote against the motion of the honourable member for London. So far from thinking that the ballot would work well, I am of opinion that—though, in quiet times, it might do no harm—yet, in times of excitement, when the public mind is agitated and inflamed, if a parliament were elected, it would be anything but a fair representation of the real and sober feelings of the country, and might do irretrievable injury. I conclude by expressing a hope, that the House will do nothing to change the constituency as established by the Reform act, till they have had a fair trial of its efficiency.”

Mr. Grote's motion was rejected by a majority of 211 against 106; but it left behind it fatal heart-burnings, jealousies, and dissensions, which went far to destroy the little cohesion that the angry discussions on the Irish Coercion bill had left between the sections of the liberal party. The Philosophic Radicals placed a high, and perhaps an extravagant value on the protection that the ballot would give to the independence of voters; they suspected, what has since been generally known, that the ballot formed a part of the original draft of the Reform bill, and they were therefore anxious to place the cabinet in such a position as would reveal the division which had taken place upon the question. They believed that the liberal party was then sufficiently strong to support a ministry entirely based on the principles of progress, and, to use a phrase of the day, they wished to remove the drag-chains which prevented the more rapid progress of reform. On the other hand, the moderate reformers, and more especially those who belonged to the old Whig aristocracy, believed that the changes already made in the constitution were of more than sufficient magnitude, and felt alarmed at the prospect of fresh innovations every year. Mr. Grote, who was the chief advocate of the ballot, brought the subject before the House in a temperate

and conciliatory speech, which, however, was conceived more in the spirit of a philosopher than a statesman. The debate was on the whole very languid: Lord Althorp, who was known to be favourably disposed towards the ballot, and had supported it on previous occasions, now opposed it, as a minister of the crown, on the ground that the Reform bill ought to have a fair trial before any other great changes should be made. In this he was supported by Sir Robert Peel, who dwelt strongly on the necessity of attending to urgent administrative reforms, and not wasting time in attempting to manufacture constitutions of speculative perfection. The sentiments to which he gave utterance were those of the great body of the middle and mercantile class; theories had gone out of fashion, and the country was anxious that the legislature should bestow its chief attention on objects of practical utility.

The embarrassments of ministers were greatly increased by the demands made for a large diminution of taxation. A vote for reducing the malt-tax was carried against them by a majority of ten, and soon after an attempt was made to obtain the abolition of the house and window duties. Lord Althorp met it by an amendment, which included a rescinding of the former vote for the reduction of the land-tax. Sir Robert Peel supported the ministerial measure, and took the opportunity of setting forth some sound and important views of the financial condition of the country.

"I repeat, that the repeal of the half of the malt-duty carries with it the repeal of the whole; and if the whole duty were repealed, and the house and window-tax were repealed, we should not be able to satisfy the public creditor; for it is a perfect delusion to suppose that the deficiency can be made up by increased consumption and by a reduction of expenditure. The only alternative then is a property-tax, to which I am decidedly opposed. I will not

pledge myself beyond the present occasion ; but I will say, that in the present circumstances of the country, and at the present period of the session, either a property or an income-tax would be a great calamity. I know that some persons contend for a tax on property who would not tolerate a tax on income. I cannot recognize the justice of such a distinction. I consider that it would be establishing a principle of spoliation to tax property, and exempt income from the tax. I will take the case of a man, who, by frugality and industry, has amassed a fortune of £10,000, which he has vested in the funds ; I will suppose that the man has two sons, on whose education he has bestowed much care and great expense ; and that these two sons, in consequence of that education and paternal care, are making large professional incomes ; are the two sons to escape a contribution to which the father is to be subject ? The father has, perhaps, by self-denial, by the application of all that he could spare from a limited pecuniary income, enabled the sons to acquire an income tenfold greater than his own ; why should the father alone be called upon to contribute to the exigences of the state ? If a property-tax be imposed, there must also be an income-tax. If either be imposed, there must be a rigorous inquisition into every man's property, as a necessary concomitant. I will not say, that circumstances may not arise, in war, or even in peace, to justify such a tax ; but, in the present circumstances of the country, I cannot think it politic to levy an income-tax ; the effect of which must be, if it be justly levied, to expose every man's business to a rigorous inquisition. It is a tax which, unaccompanied by severe and unsparing scrutiny into private affairs, would encourage fraud and perjury. Setting aside the circumstance that, generally speaking, it is better to submit to taxes already established than have recourse to others, I must say, that a property-tax would be most injurious. The tax upon houses

and windows is not, in my opinion, a bad tax. If unjustly apportioned, let that injustice be redressed. In principle it is not bad; and the inequality complained of is not necessarily incident to it. The amount of income may be concealed; but men cannot conceal the value of a house, or the number of windows. The honourable member for Lincolnshire has made a very patriotic speech to-night; for he has proved that the farmers of Lincolnshire escape almost entirely the house and window-tax. Let us profit, then, by this avowal of the member for Lincolnshire, and take care that his constituents escape the tax no longer. The learned sergeant has spoken in favour of indirect taxation, which certainly is a good species of taxation, because persons incur it voluntarily, and can apportion their expense to the tax; but it may be carried too far. It has limits, beyond which it gives rise to smuggling, and defeats the object in view. If I had in my possession the produce of a property-tax amounting to £7,300,000, I am by no means sure that I would select as the first taxes for reduction the malt-duty and the house and window duties. There are other duties, the removal of which might confer greater benefits on the people, and spread those benefits more equally over the agricultural and commercial interests of the country, and over the different classes of agricultural interests, over the growers of oats and the graziers, as well as over the growers of barley. But my main objection, I repeat, to the repeal of these taxes is, that it cannot be done, and preserve faith with the public creditor, unless an income-tax be imposed. I know that it is a popular notion with many persons, not only that a tax may be laid on property, but from which income may escape; that the tax on property may be a graduated tax, and made very productive. Let them be assured, however, if they apply a graduated property-tax, that the principle will admit of no limitation; that they will discourage industry, and induce

capitalists to transfer their capital to other countries. The hope of dishonest gains could defeat itself. A graduated property-tax would lessen the stimulus to honest exertion in future, and force men to seek other countries for the deposit of their hard-earned accumulations. For these reasons I shall oppose the motion of the honourable baronet, (Sir John Key,) and vote for the motion of the noble lord," (Althorp.)

Lord Althorp's motion was carried by a large majority, but its results had a most injurious effect on the character of the reformed House of Commons and the stability of the ministry. It was deemed a proof of vacillation, or something worse, that a vote solemnly adopted on the Friday should be indirectly rescinded on the following Tuesday; and it was complained that the Whigs were as averse to economy and retrenchment as their predecessors in office had been. The people had soon an opportunity of expressing their resentment. Lord Durham resigned his seat in the cabinet it was said on account of health, but it was believed that his opinions had been too extreme for his colleagues. Lord Ripon succeeded him as privy seal; the Colonial Secretaryship thus vacated was conferred on Mr. Stanley; he was succeeded as Secretary for Ireland by Sir John C. Hobhouse, and Mr. Ellice became Secretary at War. In consequence of these changes Sir John C. Hobhouse vacated his seat for Westminster. As he had been for fifteen years the popular representative of that borough, no doubt was entertained of his re-election, but such was the dissatisfaction created by his vote against the reduction of the house and window duties, that Colonel Evans, a politician previously all but unknown, defeated him by a majority of two hundred. A public meeting was subsequently held on Newhall Hill, near Birmingham, which was addressed by Messrs. Atwood and O'Connell, when petitions were adopted praying the king to dismiss his ministers. Chartist meetings of the discontented

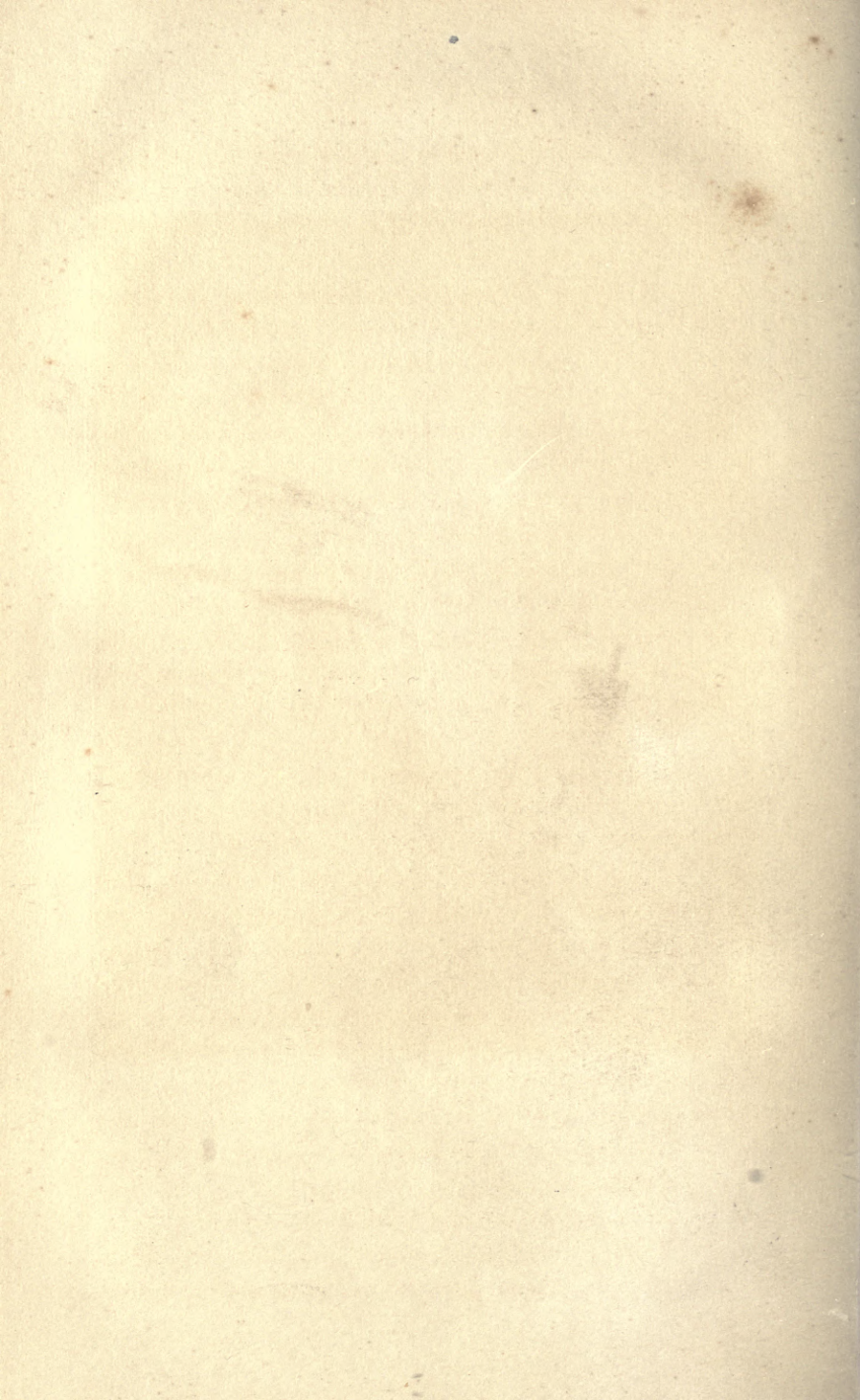


Painted by Sir Tho^s. Lawrence, P.R.A.

Engraved by J. Jenkins.

THE RT HON^{BLE} FREDERICK JOHN ROBINSON, EARL OF RIPON.

Ripon



were held in London, and in a collision with the police several serious injuries were inflicted. While the ministry was thus damaged, Peel's reputation was considerably increased by the attack which Cobbett made upon him. We have mentioned in the preceding volume Cobbett's absurd motion for an address to the crown praying that Sir Robert Peel should be expelled from the privy council in consequence of the pretended evils which his measures respecting the currency had produced. The motion was negatived by two hundred and ninety-eight, to four; and the same majority supported Lord Althorp's proposition that all the proceedings on the resolution should be erased from the journals. Peel's friends did not neglect so excellent an opportunity of pointing him out as the object of revolutionary hatred, and consequently as the chief hope and stay of the Conservative party; while they strengthened his claims by showing that his financial talents had been acknowledged even by his political opponents. The public generally, including some of the most violent Radicals, reprobated Cobbett's proceedings; and Sir Robert Peel profited not a little by this re-action.

Another proof of the difficulties which embarrass a ministry placed between two extreme parties, was afforded by the long discussions on the church temporalities bill for Ireland. The changes introduced by ministers, were principally—the enabling bishops to give leases in perpetuity, instead of for twenty-one years—the suppression of ten episcopal sees, which were to be incorporated in other dioceses—the application of the revenues of the suppressed sees to the payment of church cess and other ecclesiastical purposes—and the administration of these revenues by a board composed partly of laymen, and partly of prelates. On one side the right of parliament to interfere with the church at all, was contested by Sir Robert Inglis and the high-church party; on the other side, it was insisted by the extreme Radicals,

that ecclesiastical property was the creature of the state, and might be appropriated by the state to any purpose which the state deemed advisable. Mr. Stanley, under whose superintendence the bill was prepared, left the question of appropriation undecided; it subsequently appeared that he and his colleagues were at issue on the subject; but in the course of his speech he enunciated principles from which it might have been deduced that he had not quite resolved to oppose every attempt to apply ecclesiastical revenues to secular purposes. Sir Robert Peel embraced an early opportunity of expressing sentiments in favour of moderate church reform, in opposition to Sir Robert H. Inglis, while he at the same time strenuously protested against the projects of appropriation supposed to be entertained by a portion of the ministry. In conclusion of a long and able speech, he said—

“There is one principle involved in the bill, to which I will never consent—that by which the property of the church being improved by an act of the legislature, is diverted from ecclesiastical, and applied to secular purposes. Entertaining the opinions I did of the ability of the right honourable secretary, I never was so disappointed as at hearing his attempt to show that there was nothing in the principle of the bill inconsistent with equity, justice, and true policy. The right honourable gentleman narrowed the question between us to this simple issue. He contended that if the property of the church was improved by an act of parliament, the amount of the improvement belonged to the state. Now I must repeat, that according to all the principles which have hitherto governed the disposition of property, and according to the dictates of common sense, the property so improved belongs to the church, and to the church alone. It is because the bill recognizes that most objectionable principle, and because the right honourable gentleman

declared, that his Majesty's government would not abandon that principle, that I will take the earliest opportunity of entering my protest against the measure. I consider that principle to be most dangerous to the security of all property. It is a principle, be it observed, maintained by men of high character and station, who admit that there is no distinction in respect to inviolability between church property and private property. It is true, they contend that church property is so far under the control of the legislature, that it might admit of different distribution and appropriation for the *bona fide* purposes of promoting spiritual objects; but I have frequently heard the right honourable gentleman argue with great force, that in no other respect does church property differ from private property, or the property of corporations. I am the last man who would wish to tie down another to opinions once expressed on questions of general policy; but right and justice are immutable. If the right honourable secretary had said, that, upon consideration, he had changed his opinion, I should have made no further remark, for nothing can be more childish than the unbounded confidence which some men have in their own infallibility, and in the outcry which they raise against any change by others of an opinion once professed. But in this case, no change of opinion was avowed. I do not contend for greater sacredness of church property than was contended for by the present Lord Chancellor of Ireland. This noble lord said, on a former occasion, in this House, that although both the property of the Church and of individuals must yield to the exigencies of circumstances, he would maintain that the property of the church was as sacred as any other. Similar sentiments have been expressed by the right honourable gentleman himself, by Mr. Canning, and, I believe, by the present Lord Chancellor of England. How then can those who admit that ecclesiastical property

is in its nature the same as other property, maintain the proposition, that if parliament gave an improved value to church property, it might apply that improved value to state purposes? The right honourable gentleman has argued that the bishop has no right to this improved property; that the tenant has no right to it; and that therefore it follows as a necessary consequence, that the state has a right to it. Now, I will admit, that if parliament, by an unexpected act of interference, improves this property, the existing bishop and the existing tenant may have no claim in point of right to the value of the improvement; but has that great corporate body, the church, no right to it? On what pretence does the right honourable gentleman rest his claim to apply the value of the improvement to secular purposes? If the right honourable gentleman were to say, that church property was different in its nature from other property, and that the House might therefore apply it to state purposes, I should know what to say in reply; but I am at present contending with those who admit that there is no difference between church property and private property, and who yet assert that, if an act of parliament confers additional value upon church property, the legislature has a right to seize for state purposes that additional value. It is utterly impossible to maintain that proposition, and confine it to the church. It is equally applicable to the improved value of all property arising under similar circumstances. The right honourable gentleman says, that the bishops acquire this property under an act of parliament, and the inference is, that an act of parliament may take it away. This is a most important question; and I meet the right honourable gentleman with a distinct denial of the proposition. The rights exercised by the bishops over their property, are not acquired under an act of parliament. Those rights existed before the passing of the act to which the right honourable

gentleman alludes. That act merely restrains the original, inherent, and much more extensive rights, possessed by the bishops. It limits their power over their property to the granting of leases for twenty-one years; but before the legislature stepped in and limited their rights, the bishops possessed the power of granting leases for indefinite periods. Why does the legislature restrain the power of the bishops? For the benefit of the church, and with no other view. The very title of the act expresses its purpose. It is called, 'An act for the preservation of the inheritance, rights, and profits of lands belonging to the church and persons ecclesiastical.' I do not know whether the right honourable gentleman is aware that there is a tract in Dean Swift's Works, discussing the question of the policy of repealing this act. In this tract, he gives the reasons which induced the legislature to pass the statute of Charles II. He says, that the Roman Catholic bishops, foreseeing the Reformation was at hand, prejudiced the rights of the church by making improvident leases in perpetuity; and he adds, that many of the Protestant bishops followed their example, conferring the property of the church upon their near relations. For these reasons it was that the legislature interfered for the express purpose of preserving the property of the church, without, as was expressed in the preamble, 'detriment, spoil, or prejudice.' Accordingly, archbishops and bishops were restrained from making leases of longer duration than twenty-one years—all of longer duration being declared void, expressly for the purpose of perpetuating the rights of the church. After the lapse of 200 years, it is now proposed to repeal this act, that is, to remove the restraints which it imposes. By their removal the property of the church may be improved; but can it be argued with any semblance of justice, that the improvement belongs to the state, and not to the church? There is no new value given to this

property ; there is merely the removal of a legislative restraint on an original right, by which restraint the property was injured.

“ If we sanction this principle of the bill, we are immediately weakening the foundations of all collegiate, hospital, and corporate property, and ultimately the foundations of all private property. I therefore must protest altogether against the principle, that if by an act of parliament the House confers a value upon property, for which new value the owner gives no consideration, and which he does not even contemplate—I deny, I say, the principle, that parliament has a right to appropriate to the state this improved value of the property. But under what circumstances is it that the House is discussing the question ? If we really had a sum of £3,000,000 to deal with, there might be something so tempting in the amount of the spoliation, that some men might be induced to overlook its iniquity ; but the fact is, the House is legislating about moonshine, and are engaged in a most unprofitable discussion upon a most dangerous principle. The danger is only increased by the miserable amount of the dishonest gains. The case is not one of splendid robbery, that might be thought, from its singularity, to constitute no rule for the future. Our wrong is without the palliation of being a profitable one. The precedent would be of daily application. After providing for all the wants of the clergy, the House would not have a shilling left with respect to which it could apply the principle which it is asked to affirm ; and which it would affirm, therefore, if it agreed to the measure as it stands, in pure wantonness.

“ There are two descriptions of property belonging to the Church—tithes and land. Tithes are insecure, from what causes I will not now stop to inquire, but the land is secure. Well, say the House of Commons and the Government, ‘ the tithes we will leave to the Church, for we have made them

a worthless possession, but the lands we will improve, and take to ourselves.' What justice, I would ask, is there in this? I do not object to the improvement of the property; I want no personal interest of either bishop or tenant to be improved by it; but let the Church—let that religion for which the Church exists—benefit by the improvement. Surely the first charge on this improved revenue is to replace the sums taken from the Church by the abolition of church-cess. I do not object to an equalization of livings, and to providing for the worship of the Protestant population in large towns; but I do object to any plan which does not consider these objects as the first to be attended to. Are these sentiments, I would ask, entertained only by persons of extreme opinions in favour of the Church? Does the right honourable gentleman know the opinions of Sir John Newport upon these very questions of the diminution of the number of the bishops, and the appropriation of the Church revenues to secular purposes? No man has laboured longer or more earnestly in the cause of Church reform, or has taken views more adverse to any unjust claims of the Church than Sir John Newport; and yet this right honourable baronet has presided at a public meeting at Waterford, which came to unanimous resolutions, approving certainly of parts of the bill, but entirely dissenting from the proposed reduction in the number of the bishops, and the appropriation to other than ecclesiastical purposes, of the improved value of Church lands. I am not singular, therefore, in declining at once to admit the propriety of striking off ten Irish bishops, or of agreeing to the proposed application of the property of their sees. I recollect, that when I proposed to postpone the second reading of the bill from Tuesday to the following Monday, it was said by his Majesty's ministers to be quite impossible, for that members would pass sleepless nights in the interval; that, having voted for the Coercive

bill, their conscience was not at ease till they had given their votes for the Church-Reform bill; and yet six weeks have now elapsed, and the bill is not yet read a second time! [hear, hear.] I presume that this cheer proceeded from some gentleman whose conscience has been upbraiding him for this long delay, and that for the last six weeks his days have been comfortless, his nights without repose. For my own part, I think the question involved in this bill much too important to be decided on such grounds, or with such precipitation. On the decision of the question before the House will probably depend the future welfare of the established religion; and, however the House may agree, and I believe the great majority do agree, in the desire of removing every just cause of complaint, and in providing for the strict performance of their duties by the ministers of religion, the House must approach this question with great caution, and enter upon its consideration, not with the view of gaining mere temporary applause, but of laying a foundation of increased stability for the Church of Ireland. I am prepared to consider a measure of Church reform which has that object in view; but as this bill contains the principle that church-property, improved in its value by an act of the legislature, may, to the extent of that improvement, be applied to the purposes of the state, and as no hope is held out of the abandonment of that principle, I cannot assent to a measure which is, in my opinion, unjust towards the Church, and which sanctions a principle dangerous to the security of all property, whether lay or ecclesiastical, corporate or individual."

This measure provoked the active hostility of the Church, but did not awaken any corresponding enthusiasm in Dissenters. One of its early results was to produce what is called the Puseyite movement. Some leading divines of Oxford thought that the divine right of the Church was infringed

by the interference of parliament with ecclesiastical officers and discipline ; they saw in it a proof that what they deemed the true foundations on which the Church rests were misunderstood in the country, and, to enlighten the community on the point, they began to publish the celebrated "Tracts for the Times." A controversy was thus commenced, which still rages : on one side an authority is claimed by some zealots for the Church, which would amount to a Theocracy, or rather a Hierocracy ; on the other hand, the opposite extreme contends for a perfect recognition of the purely voluntary principle.

It is not surprising that the great body of the Irish clergy viewed the measure with unmixed dissatisfaction ; it wounded their pride, diminished their chances of promotion, and abridged their revenues. Some of them went so far as to propose to elect titular bishops to the suppressed sees, and to have them consecrated in Scotland or America. But though this wild project was abandoned, the Irish Church generally assumed an attitude of determined hostility to the Whig administration, and many of its members showed a sad want of discretion and fairness in selecting and devising means for the overthrow of the cabinet. Every possible exertion was made to defeat the measure in the Lords ; and the efforts of the Protestant clergy were seconded by Mr. O'Connell, who declared that the measure without an Appropriation clause was quite nugatory, and therefore laboured to raise such a minority against it in the House of Commons as would encourage the Peers to reject it altogether. Fortunately the Lords saw that the Church of Ireland could not be maintained as it stood, and the measure was allowed to become law. His conduct at this crisis won back to Sir Robert Peel a large body of his old ecclesiastical supporters, who had been alienated by the measure of 1829 ; but the rising Puseyite party continued to view him with suspicion,

and denounced his views of church-government as Erastian. Puseyism, however, was never popular, and the very dissatisfaction of its professors recommended Sir Robert Peel to the favour of moderate Churchmen and moderate Dissenters.

The renewal of the Charter of the Bank of England brought the whole question of the currency under discussion ; but as we have had so many occasions to refer to this important topic, we shall only notice the principal novelty in the measure of 1833. As a boon to the bank, Lord Althorp proposed that its notes for five pounds and upwards should be a legal tender, but at the same time required that the notes should be, as before, exchangeable for the precious metals when presented at the bank. Sir Robert Peel, who ever since 1819 had been the strenuous advocate of a convertible currency, saw some danger in giving even the appearance of inconvertibility to paper, and resisted the proposal of the government with more earnestness than the occasion required ; for the making notes a legal tender did not lessen the responsibility of the bank, while it gave new facilities to mercantile transactions. His arguments, however, have a value beyond the occasion, and deserve to be studied by all who wish to become acquainted with this complicated question. In reply to Mr. Baring, (since Lord Ashburton,) he said :—

“ The argument is, that the abundance of small notes stimulates undue speculation, and that an issue of one and two pound notes has the effect of encouraging the departure of coin from the kingdom, and whenever a crisis arises, whenever there is a commercial panic, all the deposits are immediately demanded in gold, because the depositors have no confidence in a paper currency. But my honourable friend, the member for Essex, (Mr. Baring,) has no right to assume that the paper currency now is the same as it was formerly. One and two pound notes are now pro-

hibited, and consequently a more equal diffusion of gold currency is now secured, whilst the existing paper is convertible into coin on demand. There is now, therefore, no risk of any commercial panic similar to that of 1825; for the inducement that formerly prevailed no longer exists. My honourable friend says, it is highly desirable to secure the country against the effects of political excitement. My honourable friend is quite right in making that statement, and I admit, that some advantages would accrue to the country by establishing unlimited confidence in the Bank of England. Everything which tends to confidence and security in the country is good; but is it possible to give this confidence by an act of parliament? My honourable friend has referred to the confidence placed in bankers' checks on the Bank of England. True, but whence does that entire confidence arise? Because there is no interference of an act of parliament. As Burke said, commercial confidence gave bankers' checks a currency on the exchange, because they had none in Westminster-Hall. All depends on commercial confidence; and if my honourable friend were to pass a law to force people to place confidence in checks, the result would be directly opposite to his wishes. My honourable friend has also referred to the want of confidence which risk of war or convulsion would be likely to produce; but where, I would ask, is that want of confidence likely first to arise? Not in remote country towns, but in London. Much, too, has been spoken of the advantages resulting from the intermediate step necessary to be taken before obtaining gold; but what has been the effect of this in the case of the Scotch banks which have issued notes with an optional clause? The Scotch banks formerly issued notes which contained a clause, giving them the option either of paying their notes on demand, or six months after sight, giving interest in the meanwhile. The

results of this, as Adam Smith stated, was, though the banks were perfectly solvent, that the exchange was against Dumfries, as compared to Carlisle, full four per cent, on account of these notes. Take the case of a banker at Plymouth, who pays his notes in Bank of England paper: the person who receives them, though he wants gold to embark for Portugal or the West Indies, would not be able to get a guinea without travelling or sending all the way to London. The form is preserved; and if a panic should arise, I am satisfied that the greatest mischief would result, because the country banker would rely on a false security. I do not see any reason why the proposed interference with country bankers should take place. I would say, let the country bankers issue notes convertible into metallic currency, and let them provide what securities may be thought right for the deposits put into their hands, but give them the right of claiming notice of the withdrawal of any deposit. This would be much better than compelling them to pay in bank paper. Besides, how open is this plan to evasion! As there is no bank-note under £5, depositors would only have to draw as many checks as they pleased for £4 19s., and they could compel payment in metallic currency. This, of course, would not be resorted to on ordinary occasions; but then, on ordinary occasions there is no danger. The object in view is to provide against the effects of a panic, whether general or partial; and when this exists, nothing in the world could prevent depositors from resorting to every possible expedient to withdraw their deposits and obtain payment in the only currency in which they could place confidence. The noble lord and the right honourable gentleman appear utterly to have discarded from their consideration the various means of evasion to which this plan is open. The noble lord came down to the House to-night, and proposed, much to my surprise, that £5 notes should be convertible into gold

on demand, and this is a most serious and important alteration. The effect of it would be this—to give a direct legislative premium on the withholding of £5 notes from the market. It would also, in my opinion, operate most injuriously on the country bankers in a time of panic. For the whole scope of this bill is, to induce country bankers not to keep gold in their coffers, but to rely on the Bank of England for supplying them with the means of meeting all demands; and if a panic were to arise, the bankers would come up to town and carry back, not gold, but bank-notes. What, however, would those bankers say when they found the holders of all Bank of England £5 notes pressing them for gold, which they most assuredly would do? The noble lord has, indeed, said that no man should take two £5 notes together and claim gold for them, because that would, in fact, be demanding gold for £10; but what would the noble lord say, if the holder of several £5 notes were to present one at the interval of every half hour—or suppose he had £50 in £5 notes, and were to employ all his servants in obtaining payment for these separately—how would he prevent it? The noble lord has proposed another very important regulation—that the notes of the Bank of England should be payable only at the places where they were issued. According to this, the whole issue by a branch bank would be payable only in the town where it was issued. But I would look at it further. What security have we that the Bank of England will continue to employ branch banks at all? Why should it? If, indeed, government issued this currency, it might say, we do it with no view to profit—we seek only the general interests of the country, which will be benefited even were the system carried on at a partial loss. But the Bank of England is in a very different position. It is a company established for the purpose of profit, and owes duties to the proprietors of bank stock. By the provision for the

formation of joint-stock companies, a direct inducement is held out to withdraw the branch banks, for the Bank of England will find it much more economical to employ joint-stock banks, with a few partners as agents for the circulation of their notes, than to keep up their branch banks. The consequence would be, that Bank of England paper would be payable in London only. Yet this paper is to circulate in every part of England.

“Under such circumstances, no act of parliament could give confidence to a currency which had no intrinsic value even were it issued by an institution which had ten times the stock, and which was ten times more solvent, than the Bank of England. This would inevitably lead to an agio on gold. Only suppose a man in the country wanted to leave England, or for any other occasion to convert £500 into gold, he would be unable to get his notes exchanged except in London—that man would readily give a premium for gold. It is important also to consider what effect making Bank of England notes a legal tender would have in promoting forgery? It would be most difficult to detect forgeries of bank-notes at a distance of two hundred miles from the persons who alone were competent to distinguish them. The time at which the noble lord proposed this measure is equally objectionable. About two months ago, my honourable friend, the member for Whitehaven (Mr. M. Atwood), proposed an inquiry into the currency, with a view to its relaxation. The noble lord negatived the proposition, and moved a resolution, declaring his determination to adhere to the standard; but at the same time said, he would appoint two committees—one to investigate the state of agriculture, the other that of commerce; which committees have since assiduously prosecuted their inquiries, and have particularly directed their attention to the effects of the banking and currency system on trade and agriculture. What a mockery, however, are these com-

mittees, when the noble lord will not condescend to wait for their reports—now, doubtless, nearly ready—but comes forward and proposes this great alteration in the currency without paying the slightest attention to their suggestions. I was never so surprised as when the noble lord and his colleagues proposed this alteration, so repugnant to their former principles. I had always understood the doctrine of the noble lord to be—‘Issue what paper you please, only let it be payable on demand, and in a metallic currency;’ but to take up one particular class of paper, and propose to destroy all other classes, in order that this may circulate on their ruin, is the most extraordinary proposal I have ever heard. One and two pound notes ought not to be issued, because they interfere with the gold currency; but beyond that I think it right to have no check beyond that of immediate convertibility. I agree with a writer of great eminence on this subject, whose opinion is the more worthy of confidence, because it has been confirmed by subsequent events. Adam Smith said, ‘It were better, perhaps, that no bank-notes were issued in any part of the kingdom for a smaller sum than £5. Paper-money would then probably confine itself, in every part of the kingdom, to the circulation between the different dealers, as much as it does at present in London, where no bank-notes are issued under £10 value; £5 being, in most parts of the kingdom, a sum which, though it will purchase, perhaps, little more than half the quantity of goods, is as much considered, and is as seldom spent all at once, as £10 are amidst the profuse expense of London. Where paper-money, it is to be observed, is pretty much confined to the circulation between dealers and dealers, as in London, there is always plenty of gold and silver. Where it extends itself to a considerable part of the circulation between dealers and consumers, as in Scotland, and still more in North America, it banishes gold and silver almost entirely from the country;

almost all the ordinary transactions of its interior commerce being thus carried on by paper.' The same author also says, at the conclusion of his chapter on metallic and paper currency—'If bankers are restrained from issuing any circulating bank-notes or notes payable to the bearer, for less than a certain sum, and if they are subjected to the obligation of an immediate and unconditional payment of such bank-notes as soon as presented, their trade may, with safety to the public, be rendered in all other respects perfectly free. The late multiplication of banking companies in both parts of the United Kingdom—an event by which many people have been alarmed—instead of diminishing, increases the security of the public. It obliges all of them to be more circumspect in their conduct, and by not extending their currency beyond its due proportion to their cash, to guard themselves against those malicious runs, which the rivalry of so many competitors is always ready to bring upon them. It restrains the circulation of each particular company within a narrower circle, and reduces their circulating notes to a smaller number. By dividing the whole circulation into a greater number of parts, the failure of any one company—an accident which in the course of things must sometimes happen—becomes of less consequence to the public. This free competition, too, obliges all bankers to be more liberal in their dealings with their customers, lest their rivals should carry them away. In general, if any branch of trade, or any division of labour, be more advantageous to the public—the freer and more general the competition, it will always be the more so.' This was the reasoning of Adam Smith, *à priori*, fifty or sixty years ago; and the system which he recommended as the best which could be established, now exists in this country, and this is the system which the noble lord proposes to change. The noble lord, now, on the 1st of July, without waiting for the reports of the two committees he has

appointed, comes forward with one of the most startling propositions I have ever heard, founded on the most slender body of argument possible. The noble lord says, it is all to prevent panic. The noble lord may say, it is all to prevent panic: but no act of parliament can prevent panics. The noble lord may depend upon it, the people will never place confidence in bank paper, merely because an act of parliament calls on them to do so. The noble lord may be assured, that the confidence will not be obtained for a paper currency, founded on a compulsory enactment."

It is worthy of remark, that the proposal to increase the amount of paper-circulation is always made at a time when the commercial credit of the country is in any way deranged. Now credit can only be deranged when it is stretched beyond its due proportion to capital; but the object of issuing paper-money at such a crisis is to afford new facilities and therefore a further extension of credit; that is, to remedy an evil by adding to its amount. Obviously such a course would only delay the evil day, but would add immensely to the calamity at the time of its more distant but certain arrival. In short the nation would resemble the merchant who trades upon bills instead of capital, and who when his bills become due takes them up by issuing a fresh set to a larger amount. Every impediment interposed to the convertibility of notes serves merely to disguise from men the real proportion between the national credit and the national capital, and to introduce the dangerous system of trading on unreal capital. At the time in which we write, railway shares have absorbed a disproportionate share of the capital and the credit of the country. They must consequently have taken away from other trading interests their fair share of the credit and capital necessary to the efficient conducting of their business; and furthermore they have stretched credit beyond its fair proportion to capital. Under such circumstances, to attempt

to create a new stock of credit by legislative means, would be to take the most sure steps to bring about a national bankruptcy. Sir Robert Peel has many claims on the gratitude of his countrymen, but none is greater than the firmness with which he has resisted every attempt to substitute fictitious credits for real capital.

The termination of the East India Company's charter presented another monopoly with which parliament and the country had to deal. It was resolved that the government of India should be for some time longer vested in the hands of the Company, but it was deprived of all its exclusive privileges and monopolies as a commercial body; the trade with China was opened to British merchants, and several great improvements were made in the internal government of India. Little or no opposition was made to the ministerial measure; its obvious excellence was too self-evident to be controverted.

Of still greater importance were the measures taken for the abolition of Negro slavery in the West Indies. After long but not very interesting debates, it was resolved that all children born after the passing of the act, and all those under six years of age, should be free; that all existing slaves should become compulsory apprentices, predial negroes for seven, and non-predial for five years; that the sum of twenty millions should be granted as a compensation to the proprietors of slaves; and that stipendiary magistrates should be appointed, to superintend the condition of the apprenticed negroes.

The sympathies of the people of England, gratified by the liberation of the negroes, were severely wounded by the sufferings of the unhappy Poles, groaning under the cruel tyranny of Russia. Mr. Cutlar Ferguson brought the subject under the consideration of the House of Commons, but it was clearly a topic in which the House could not interfere,

unless prepared to follow up its protest against Russian misrule by a declaration of war, if such tyranny should be continued. This was very ably shown by Sir Robert Peel; and as his speech was one of the best he ever delivered on foreign affairs, we shall extract the most striking part of it:

“I had not the slightest notion that the honourable and learned member had risen to reply, but merely to answer a question put to him, or I should have interposed before the honourable gentleman had spoken. I am aware of the inconvenience of speaking after a reply, but the honourable gentleman having expressed his determination to press the motion to a division, that circumstance imposes upon me the duty of stating the grounds upon which I cannot acquiesce in the motion. I do not deny the right of the House to offer advice to the crown with reference to the diplomatic relations of the country. I can conceive circumstances to arise of so grave a nature as to impose upon the House the duty of declaring its opinion, and tendering its advice to the crown; but I must contend, that the House ought to have a clear foresight of all the consequences which might ensue from their intercession. Care ought to be taken not to trench upon the royal prerogative, without a clear perception of the necessity of such a step, nor without scrupulously and carefully weighing the probable results of the interposition. Above all, there ought to be nothing equivocal or ambiguous in the advice tendered to the crown. The import of the present motion, however, is in my judgment equivocal and ambiguous. It contains two distinct propositions—first, that this country is party to the Treaty of Vienna; and, secondly, that that Treaty has been violated. If the House be prepared to place this motion on record, the next step surely ought to be to offer some advice to the crown, in language clear and decisive, as to the course to be pursued. If this question related distinctly to any interest of our own, what

language, consistently with the dignity and honour of England, would be used by the House? It would say to his Majesty—‘Your Majesty is a party to a treaty—that treaty has been violated—the national honour is implicated—and we, the House of Commons, demand redress.’ But what is the resolution of the honourable gentleman in which advice is tendered? Not that the crown should enforce the observance of those rights of Poland of which England is the guarantee, but that the king should not recognize, or in any way give the sanction of his government to the present political state and condition of Poland. If the House are satisfied that the treaty has been violated, and are prepared to record their opinion to that effect, then, in consideration of its own character, in consideration of what is due to the crown, and in consideration of what is due to the people of Poland, there ought to be no misconception as to the real intentions of the House of Commons. But as I have already said, the language of the resolution is ambiguous; we merely ask the crown not to recognize or sanction the political situation and condition of Poland. But is the recognition or sanction of England in any way required? If withheld, how does the refusal better the condition of Poland? The Emperor of Russia claims for himself—whether right or wrong I stop not to inquire—an authority to control his subjects, who are in a state of revolt, and the honourable gentleman contents himself with calling upon the crown not to give its sanction to the present state of Poland. I do not comprehend what the honourable gentleman means; and when I refer to the language used in the debate, I am left still more in doubt. One honourable gentleman says, that the motion means nothing—that it is of a negative character. Be it so; but surely it is not befitting the dignity of the House of Commons to place upon the journals a record, that a treaty, to which England is a party, has been violated,

and then to offer to the crown advice of a negative character, as it is termed. The honourable gentleman says, that he expects no advantage from this address, and that the condition of the unhappy Poles would not be ameliorated by its adoption. Then why adopt it? The honourable and learned member for Tipperary says, that it is a question of ignominy or war, and that he has no hesitation in declaring for war in preference to ignominy. Yet I deprecate war, and say that this is not a step toward it. What then is it? Is it a mere *brutum fulmen*? Are no steps to be taken in consequence of this address? If not, then I implore the House not to set the example of an interposition, from which no fruits are to be expected. But if those who support the motion expect any fruits, I have a right to ask the nature and character of them. One honourable gentleman said, let government make a strong remonstrance to Russia, and if Russia makes a strong remonstrance in return, then he has no doubt the people would support the government in a war. But I for one would not involve the country in this collision of angry remonstrances, if war is to be the probable result. The gentlemen who support the address are much divided in opinion—some look to war as a consequence scarcely to be deplored; others denounce war; but I deprecate making hostile remonstrances to a power like Russia, on a subject of this nature, unless we are prepared to follow them up by some decisive measure in the event of their failure. An honourable and learned gentleman said, that the time was come when the illusions of military glory were dissipated, and the true character of military heroes was justly appreciated. From such a declaration I expected that the honourable gentlemen would have been a strenuous advocate for the maintenance of peace. But I find him among the most reckless partisans of war. I cannot acquiesce in the address. If the national faith required the inter-

position of this House, I should be prepared to advise much stronger measures. I would have asked the crown to remonstrate in the first instance, and, if necessary, to enforce that remonstrance, by maintaining the rights of Poland. While I cannot support the resolution, I beg distinctly to state, that I participate in all the sentiments of admiration which have been expressed on the gallantry of Poland, and, at the same time, to express my sympathy and deep regret for the sufferings of that nation, by supposing the statements of the honourable gentleman founded on fact. On a former occasion, when the honourable gentleman introduced the subject before the House, I deprecated a too ready belief of the honourable and learned member's statements, though I did not undertake to contradict those statements, and particularly that with regard to the removal of orphan children; but if the statement is well founded, that children, not orphans, were forcibly removed—not, as I had supposed, for the purposes of protection—if it is really true, that five thousand families have been driven into exile without any proof of guilt, while I cannot conceive the policy of such a course of conduct, yet if such was pursued, no man is prepared in stronger terms than myself to express my deep regret and indignation at such a violation of the rights of common humanity. I would remind Russia of her own expressions as to the existence of those rights, and the claims of powerful nations to enforce them, during the war between Turkey and Greece, when the Porte threatened to remove the inhabitants of the Morea. Russia then declared, that such a proceeding was a violation of all the rights of humanity, and that it should not be allowed. After such an opinion pronounced and acted upon by Russia, I still cling to the hope that the statements are exaggerated. If, however, the statements are true, I beg that my non-acquiescence in the present motion shall not be considered as a proof that

I am indifferent to the wrongs and sufferings of a gallant people, or that I do not share in those feelings of indignation, which, if the conduct of Russia be truly described, will be unanimous throughout the House and the country."

During this memorable session, the seeds of many important discussions which have since engrossed a large share of public attention, were sown. Among these, a leading place must be assigned to the demand of a large section of the Church of Scotland, to have the system of patronage entirely abolished, and the appointment of pastors given to the free elections of their congregations. Few people imagined when the subject was first introduced, that it would lead to the unhappy schism which at present divides the church of Scotland; the debate attracted little notice, and was very imperfectly reported by the English press. But the part which Sir Robert Peel took in it, was so significant of the conduct which his cabinet subsequently pursued, that it is necessary to rescue his speech from the comparative oblivion into which it has fallen. Mr. Sinclair having proposed the abolition of patronage, which was rather feebly resisted by the Lord Advocate of Scotland, Sir Robert Peel rose, and said—

"I could not presume to say a word upon the subject, had I not had the honour for some years, of advising the crown in its disposal of its patronage in the church of Scotland. I agree in the postponement recommended by the learned lord opposite; but I differ from the learned lord in supposing that anything but a calm would be produced in the church of Scotland, by devolving on the people of each parish the right of electing their own pastor. Nor do I think that the characters of the ministers of the church would be raised by the change. Feuds and discord would arise, which are now unheard, and which must prevail, but for the corrective of patronage. I do not contest the point

for the sake of patronage; for whilst I had the honour of advising the crown with respect to its disposal, it never once occurred that a benefice was disposed of from any political views. If I had any reason to suppose that the majority of the respectable inhabitants of a parish were agreed in the choice of a minister, I should advise the crown to appoint that minister; but if I found canvassing going on, and all the artifices of election had recourse to, in favour of different candidates, I advise the crown to listen to neither party, but to exercise its right, and make some appointment above all exception. This is not done by taking the nominee of this or of that person, but by consulting some of the most eminent men in the Scottish church, and taking from obscurity, perhaps, some person of merit, whose merits deserve to be thus rewarded. If there are abuses in the patronage exercised by the crown, or by individuals, I see no reason why such abuses should not be corrected by the General Assembly of the Kirk, if it have the means of correcting them. All oppose the principle of devolving the right of election on the inhabitants of a parish. The dissent pointed out does not, I believe, arise from abuses in the disposal of patronage, but from other causes. The question, however, is surrounded with difficulties which have not been even hinted at. Who are to be the electors? And in answering this question, it must be remembered that the object is to ensure harmony in the parish. Are the heritors to exercise this right? That would exclude a great portion of the religious part of the parish. Are the communicants to be the electors? Can it be contended that they are all qualified to join in the choice of a minister? But wherever the right of election is fixed, dissatisfaction will be excited. As there are many persons in Scotland unprovided with benefices, there will be no lack of candidates for a vacancy. A sort of public trial will take place between them, which

will offer a most imperfect means of judging of their merits—a radical defect—since a mistake is irremediable, for the party is elected for life. No doubt the patron might possibly make a bad choice; but I believe that the operation of public opinion would act more strongly on him, than upon individual electors, and make him the fit depository of this power. The election arts, which might not be objectionable in contests for civil offices, would certainly tend to lower the respect for religion, when used in a contest for a religious office. Besides, if an election be carried only by a small majority, it is clear that a very large part of the parish would be irritated against their pastor, who would, of course, have as little influence over them, as over the majority under whose influence he had been elected. One of the bad effects, therefore, of popular election would be, its tendency to diminish the independence of the minister. I trust the House, therefore, will not rashly affirm the principle now proposed, but will be ready to apply itself to the removal of any real abuses in the church of Scotland.”

The last remarkable speech of this session to which we shall advert, was delivered on the proposed grant of a million to defray the arrears of tithe due to the clergy of Ireland. On this occasion, Sir Robert Peel said—

“Before this million is voted, it is absolutely necessary we should understand the principle on which it is asked for; so strange does it appear to me to be, that I really am almost convinced that I am in error myself upon the subject. The principle, as I take it, is to advance to lay and other tithe impropiators, who may not have received their tithes for two years past, or who may not receive them for the present year, this sum of money; and the crown is to be the party advancing, and the party claiming an equivalent for that advance at the expiration of five years, till which period the amount is to be added to the composition-fund,

and after all only to be paid off by instalments. Last year we went on another principle to that which we now propose. We went on this principle—that the incumbent was unable to collect his tithe, and therefore the crown should be called upon to levy for the clergy. Last year, when the grant of relief was made, a very different principle actuated and directed the proceedings of the government with reference to the clergy of Ireland. I admit that the state of the clergy in Ireland is such, that it is impossible for me to withhold my vote of assistance to that deserving and meritorious body. The honourable and learned gentleman, who may be said to represent the clergy of Ireland in this House, says that the money ought to be paid to the clergy without any deduction. Nothing can be more natural than such a proposition on his part, on behalf of the clergy; but there is another party whose interests must be considered—the people of England, who have already paid their own tithes. This sum ought to be paid by the people of Ireland, in what proportion by the landlord and tenant, I will not stop to discuss; but if this legal charge is to be transferred to the people of England, who have already obeyed the law, it will certainly be holding out a premium to the disobedience of the law. We ought to endeavour to strike a balance between the interests of the Irish clergy and the interests of the people of England. I hope that the House will support government in their rigorous efforts to enforce the authority of the law in Ireland. I object to the principle of the vote; I will say nothing of the grant to the West India proprietors, because that was a peculiar case; but if ministers proceed on the principle of solving their difficulties by large votes of money to be levied on the people, there is an end of all hope of improving the financial affairs of this country. This principle of escaping from temporary difficulties by votes of money from the public purse, is one which would involve

the country in inextricable confusion. I hope at least, that the details of the measure will be maturely considered, and the best security possible taken to obtain the repayment of the money from those by whom it is due in Ireland. I should augur the worst possible result from the present vote, if the course now about to be adopted should be allowed to be drawn into a precedent, and unless it is followed up by a vigorous effort to compel payment from those from whom the money is really due."

On the 29th of August the king in person prorogued the parliament. The session had been unusually protracted and laborious. The House of Commons had sat one hundred and forty-two days at an average of more than nine hours per day; upwards of eleven thousand speeches were delivered, and in addition to the important topics previously mentioned in this chapter, it appears that no less than one hundred and sixty-six private bills passed through all the stages of legislation.

CHAPTER X.

DECLINE AND DISSOLUTION OF EARL GREY'S
ADMINISTRATION.

THROUGHOUT Great Britain there was a general feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction at the closing of the first session of the reformed parliament. Much no doubt had been achieved; the Irish Church had been modified, and its pressure on a population of a different creed greatly diminished; the burden of Irish tithes had been thrown chiefly on the Protestant landlords; the municipal abuses in Scotland had been corrected; the trade with India and China had been thrown freely open; colonial slavery had been abolished; and the Bank of England had been re-constructed on a more liberal basis than heretofore. These were great achievements, but yet they did not satisfy the nation; it is not easy to guess what were the results which had been expected from Reform, but all were agreed that the expected results had not been obtained, and the popularity of the Whigs declined rapidly in consequence. Nothing damaged the party in England and Ireland more than the Coercion bill: their abandonment of some of its most stringent clauses during its passage through the Lower House was assumed as a proof of their having sought a greater amount of arbitrary power than the necessity of the case justified. This belief was strengthened when, as the year rolled on, it appeared that there was no occasion to put any of the coercive clauses of the act into operation; many of the liberal members who had supported the measure were called to

a severe account by their constituents, and their explanations were not always considered perfectly satisfactory.

The Church was wholly alienated from the Whigs; the English prelates and clergy regarded with indignation the attempts made to open the universities to dissenters; the facilities proposed to be granted for the use of dissenting ordinances at marriages and burials; and the abolition of several episcopal sees in Ireland. Already the cry of "No Popery," began to be raised, and the reckless violence of O'Connell greatly added to its strength. Peel was marked as the great opponent of O'Connell, and he thus acquired great popularity with the people of England, and with the sane, sound, and intelligent portion of the people of Ireland. Formidable as O'Connell was to the Whigs as an opponent, he was infinitely more dangerous as a political ally, for he shifted upon them the responsibility of his violence, and employed their patronage not to strengthen their party, but to recruit the ranks of his own personal supporters. There was at that time in Ireland the nucleus of a truly liberal party, equally attached to the British connection and the principles of civil and religious freedom. In its ranks were included some of the most wealthy Catholic and Protestant proprietors, many eminent barristers, and nearly all the men of letters connected with Ireland. O'Connell, as we have said before, hated this party more intensely than he did the Orangemen themselves, and his adhesion to the Whigs could only be purchased by their being sacrificed. The Marquises of Angelsea and Wellesley, on the contrary, made every effort to keep the liberal party together, and hence, the latter was removed from Ireland, so soon as the alliance between O'Connell and the Whigs was drawn very close. But before this had been done, the liberal party in Ireland had detected symptoms of a readiness to set them aside, and as they were men of independent minds, they were not slow to withdraw

from exertions which were thankless, and apparently embarrassing.

It thus happened, that moderate men of all parties, including some of the most active reformers themselves, began to look to Peel as the minister most likely to conduct the affairs of the country, without truckling to O'Connell in Ireland, and the more violent dissenters and radicals in England on the one hand, or without reviving Orangeism and Toryism on the other. Peel almost without exertion found himself at the head of the Conservatives; while the Whigs, much to their surprise and annoyance, found themselves, by the force of unfortunate circumstances, ranged in the category of destructives. The whole course and direction of the session of 1834 strongly tended to increase and confirm this view of parties throughout the country; it was a session of strange revolutions, and of still stranger political combinations.

The royal speech at the opening of the session not only condemned the agitation for the repeal of the Union, but attributed to it the agrarian crimes prevalent in Ireland. Though thus personally and almost directly assailed, O'Connell supported the attack with more meekness than had been anticipated. He contrived, however, to entangle Lord Althorp, the ministerial leader of the House of Commons, in one of the most vexatious and whimsical scrapes which has embarrassed any statesman of modern times.

Mr. M. D. Hill, when called upon by his constituents at Hull, to explain his vote in favour of the Irish Coercion bill, declared that the measure had been urged in private by some of the Irish members who had voted against it in public. When the report of this speech reached Ireland, O'Connell denounced Mr. Hill as a malignant traducer, and declared his intention of bringing the matter under the consideration of parliament. But at the same time, he

contrived to insinuate that there may have been some Irish member partially guilty of such double-dealing, levelling the imputation against Mr. Shiel, of whom he had ever been intensely jealous, even when apparently united to him by the closest bonds of friendship. In the debate on the report of the address, O'Connell directly put the question to Lord Althorp; his lordship replied, that Irish members had acted in the manner described, but refused to give any names or particulars. Several Irish members then asked, were they the individuals aimed at, and were answered in the negative. Mr. Shiel then put the question, and was answered in the affirmative. A strange scene of personal altercation ensued; Lord Althorp offered every explanation short of retracting the charge, while Mr. Shiel insisted on a complete retractation. Sir Robert Peel, as a politician indifferent to both parties, endeavoured to show that Lord Althorp's explanation ought to be received as satisfactory :

“ I think it,” he said, “ extremely desirable that the honourable and learned member should be fully convinced that the House has no intention whatever of imposing upon him a line of conduct that could by possibility be deemed derogatory to his personal honour. The question appears to me to stand thus: there is a charge against the public character of the honourable member, but there is none other. The House, therefore, require from the honourable and learned gentleman a declaration that he will not resort to means well understood, and foreign to the rules of this House, to relieve himself from the charge. The House ask from the honourable and learned member no concession whatsoever. It never occurred to me that the noble lord, when he used the word ‘ responsibility,’ meant to place himself in personal opposition to the honourable and learned gentleman. All that I understand is this, and I believe it is the general feeling of the House, - that

the noble lord, being asked as a minister whether or not a certain statement had been made, said it had, and that he believed in the person who made the statement, but that he could not disclose his name, and, therefore, he took upon himself the responsibility of declaring that there had been such a statement, [*Mr. Shiel* said: 'Will not disclose.'] Why, the noble lord *cannot*. It is impossible he should mean to attach to himself a personal responsibility. [*Mr. Shiel*: 'He said so.'] The honourable and learned member fixes a technical meaning upon the word. I declare, upon my honour, as a man and a gentleman, that I can see nothing in the slightest degree derogatory in the course proposed to the honourable and learned member. No concession is asked. On the contrary, the honourable and learned member is left at perfect liberty to take whatever steps he thinks necessary for the vindication of his public character, in the assembly in which it has been attacked; and that assembly has a perfect right, and is bound to require at his hands, an assurance that that which is properly within its jurisdiction should not be transferred to another."

Shiel was too irritated, and had too much at stake to be guided by Sir Robert Peel's cool recommendation. As neither he nor Lord Althorp would give the required pledges to the Speaker, it was ordered that both should be given into the custody of the sergent-at-arms; in the course of the evening both submitted to the House, and were liberated. Mr. Shiel was now in a most painful position: of the charge, in form and manner, as stated, he was undoubtedly innocent; but, during the time when the Coercion bill was under discussion, the steward of some lands, which he held in trust, had been most barbarously murdered, and it was not improbable, that under the first excitement of feeling on hearing of this outrage, he had

given vent to some expression intimating a desire that effective measures should be taken to check agrarian crime in Ireland. Several Irish members, including even some of "the tail," had used similar language, and did not disguise their belief, that O'Connell went too far when he opposed coercive measures of any kind. The fact was perfectly notorious; and Shiel was individualized and selected, simply because O'Connell hoped to crush a formidable rival by representing him as a traitor to his party and his country. It was therefore with feelings of bitter mortification that Shiel found himself obliged to trust O'Connell with the vindication of his character.

O'Connell moved that the affair should be investigated by a select committee, but so coldly and tamely, that he seemed to court the rejection of his motion. Sir Francis Burdett moved as an amendment, the order of the day; and this seemed likely to be carried, for the House was unwilling to enter into the history of mere hearsays and private conversations. Sir Robert Peel at once saw the injustice of allowing such a charge to hang over Shiel's head without his being permitted any opportunity of refuting it, and he urged the propriety of investigation so forcibly, that he carried with him the feelings of the House. Following Mr. Secretary Stanley, who had spoken rather intemperately, Sir Robert Peel said:—

"I will not follow the example of the right honourable gentleman who has just concluded, and enter upon the observations I have to offer, by promising to speak to the question under discussion with coolness, lest, like the right honourable gentleman, I might, of course through inadvertence, expose myself to the charge, not of speaking without the walls of the House differently from what I do within them, but, and in my opinion to a graver charge, of speaking towards the conclusion of my address, in a spirit, if not dia-

metrically, very nearly the opposite of that to which, on setting out, I had pledged myself. No one, I beg to observe, could feel more deeply than I do the extreme difficulty of the situation in which the House finds itself placed on the present occasion. I feel deeply that difficulty for many reasons, but for none more than that arising from a fear—a well-grounded fear I have reason to think it is—that we will gain no credit from the public for the time which has been occupied in the present discussion. I fear that the public, neither having watched, or, if they have, not being capable of comprehending the progressive steps by which the House has become involved in the present difficulty, they will be disposed to think their representatives are trifling their time away in such discussions, while questions of the deepest importance are awaiting their consideration. For some time past the public mind has been impatiently directed to the meeting of parliament, for ascertaining what measures of relief, what plans of further reform, will be proposed by the government, with a view to the removal of those burdens of which the country complains; and when it appears that the House of Commons, as well as the government, instead of applying ourselves to the important business for the transaction of which parliament has been assembled, are occupied solely in the settlement of matters of a merely personal nature, in no wise interesting either to us or the country; and when, moreover, they perceive those matters of a merely personal nature procure a much larger attendance, and excite far more interest, than the discussion of matters of the highest public importance, it is but too reasonable to apprehend that great discontent and dissatisfaction will be manifested. If the question at issue on the present occasion were merely whether an inquiry should be instituted to ascertain if a member of the House of Commons had expressed himself out of the House at variance with his conduct in the House,

I would never give my consent to such a proceeding, being firmly convinced many occasions might arise when a member of parliament might so act, without being influenced by motives in the slightest degree discreditable either to his character as a legislator or a gentleman. I could myself cite many cases in which it would be perfectly consistent with honour, if not with a wise determination, for an individual placed in the situation of a legislator, not merely to conceal his own private feeling, but, without laying himself open to the charge of hypocrisy, to give his support to measures diametrically at variance with such feelings. What is the basis of all party connections? Could a party subsist even for a day, if it were necessary for the purpose of laying claim to the character of an honourable man, that each component part of it should express in public the precise sentiments he entertained in private? Supposing a person at a dinner-table to express his private opinion of a measure originating with a party with whom he is united in public life, is he, in the event of giving up that private opinion out of deference to his party, to be exposed to a charge almost amounting to dishonesty? The idea is absurd.—What is the every-day conduct of government itself? Is there any one in this House so ignorant as to suppose that on many questions cabinet ministers, yielding to the decision of their colleagues, do not speak and act in parliament in strict conformity with the opinions they have expressed in the cabinet? If ministers are to be taunted on every occasion that they hold opinions in the cabinet different from what they do in this House, and if parliament is to be made the scene of these taunts, I believe I should not be going too far in saying, the House would have time for little else. It is the uniform practice with all governments, and I should be sorry to think the practice carries any stain with it, for a member of the administration who chances to entertain opinions differing

from those of the majority of his colleagues, rather than separate himself from them, to submit to be over-ruled, and even though they do not fully concur in their policy, to give their support to the measures which, as an administration, they promulgate. I will give the House an instance of this fact. It was very generally reported on a late occasion, that upon the question of sending troops to Portugal, a strong difference of opinion took place in the cabinet—now, would it, I ask, be either just or fair to call on those who, in the discussion of the cabinet, had spoken in favour of sending out troops to aid the cause of Donna Maria, to come down, and in parliament advocate that measure in opposition to the decision of their colleagues. No one would think of doing so. Again, I will suppose the case of a member representing a large constituency, who entertains, upon an important question, an opinion at variance with that of the body whom he represents. Would it not be monstrous to charge that man with acting the part of a hypocrite, if, after explaining to his constituents what were his private opinions, he were to say to them, ‘Such and such are my opinions, but, as they do not happen to coincide with yours, I shall feel it my duty to yield them up, and act in conformity with the views you entertain upon the subject?’ I will not go the length of saying that such ought to be the conduct of a representative who finds his private opinions at variance with the wishes of his constituents, but I contend that the charge of dishonest or dishonourable conduct would not lie against a man for so acting. If, therefore, the mere question at issue is, whether a member is liable to have his conduct arraigned for speaking out of the House differently from his conduct in the House, I will not, for the reasons I have stated, give my assent to the inquiry which it is now proposed should take place.

“Upon abstract grounds, moreover, I would vote against such an inquiry, namely, the establishing of the fatal, the

dangerous precedent of making the House of Commons the medium of inquiry into private communications, into confidential conversations. Regarding the proposition in this point of view, it does, I confess, strike me with the greatest alarm. While upon this part of the subject, I wish to observe that I most deeply lament—giving the noble lord, at the same time, every credit for the spirit and manliness he has throughout manifested—the course which the noble lord has taken. That this course is dictated by spirit and manliness, on one can deny; but, while the admission is made, it is deeply to be lamented, that except spirit and manliness, nothing is to be found in it.

“In reply to the question of the honourable and learned member for the city of Dublin, it was open to the noble lord to answer, that no such communication as that alleged to have been made to him, had been made; and had the noble lord so answered, as it was perfectly competent for him to have done, the House would not have been placed in the situation of difficulty it now finds itself in, and the public time would not be sacrificed as it already has been, and as there is reasonable ground to fear it yet will be, in the adjustment of the matter. The question, then, for consideration, however, is, seeing all the difficulty of the case, how that difficulty is to be got rid of. For my part, impressed as I am with the inconvenience of the course proposed—fearful though I am, that in granting the desired inquiry, the House would be establishing a precedent which hereafter it might be as difficult as it would be desirable to get rid of, I would submit to this inconvenience, and incur the utmost evils of the precedent, rather than be a party to an act of positive, of flagrant injustice to the honourable and learned member for Tipperary. Dangerous as is the precedent which the proposed inquiry might hereafter establish, that precedent by which a positive, undeniable act of injustice

would be done to the honourable and learned gentleman, if he were refused those means of self-exculpation he so earnestly demands, is equally, if not more, dangerous ; and the more certainly it is avoided, the more creditable it will be, as well to the dignity, as to the manliness, of our assembly.

“ If, therefore, the honourable and learned member for Tipperary shall persevere in his demand for an inquiry—if, not content with the belief which his solemn declaration has produced—a declaration to which I give every credit, and upon hearing which, I did, as I was bound to do, believe the honourable and learned member entirely innocent of the charge brought against him;—if the honourable and learned gentleman claims to have not only the statement of the noble lord, but that originally made by the honourable and learned member for Hull, fully investigated—if, unwilling to let the matter drop at its present stage (which, I contend, he is at perfect liberty to do, without in the smallest degree laying himself open to the charge of shrinking from the inquiry he has so earnestly demanded), the honourable and learned member stood up in his place, and said: ‘ I consider I still labour under an unjust imputation ; give me the means of clearing myself ’—should no other member go out with him, in the event of a division, I most certainly would. The honourable and learned member has been placed in an extremely embarrassing situation by the interference of the House ; and it would, I think, be an act of gross injustice not to carry that interference further, and, as far as lies in our power, give him then the means of extricating himself from the difficulty with which he is now surrounded. The charge originally made, was made against Irish members generally. It is a most serious one—involving, in point of fact, an act so discreditable in every sense of the word, that, unless satisfactorily explained, it would be sufficient to con-

demn the party implicated, not only in the eyes of every man possessed of the feelings of a gentleman, but in the eyes of the constituency whom he represents. This charge has been denied, solemnly denied, by the honourable and learned gentleman; and as in itself it bears no internal evidence of truth as applicable to that honourable and learned gentleman, the matter would there have terminated, had it not occurred that—in a reply to a question put to him touching the truth of an allegation, part of such original charge—the noble lord, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, very unfortunately for himself and the House, propounded a charge of a somewhat similar tendency against the honourable and learned member individually, which he alleged had been reported by a third party to him. This gave a force to the original charge, which abstractedly it had not; and the honourable and learned gentleman against whom it was aimed, having, with a view of exculpating himself, claimed an investigation, the House have no alternative but to grant it. We have already interfered for the purpose of preventing the honourable and learned gentleman from procuring that redress there was too much reason to suppose he meant seeking elsewhere, and having done so, we cannot, consistently with justice, shrink from the only means left by which that redress can be obtained. For these reasons, it is my intention, in the event of a division, to give my vote in opposition to the amendment of the honourable baronet, the member for Westminster.”

The report of the committee completely exonerated Mr. Shiel, and Lord Althorp admitted that the persons from whom he had heard the report were in all probability mistaken. Thus ended this ridiculous interlude, which tended not a little to lower both the ministers and the Irish members in the estimation of the country.

One Irish embarrassment had scarcely been removed, when

O'Connell involved both the ministers and his own followers in one still more serious. Baron Smith was one of the greatest ornaments of the Irish bench ; liberal and enlightened, he had supported the cause of Catholic Emancipation at a time when the advocacy of the measure was an effectual bar to official and professional promotion ; merciful and humane, he offered all the resistance in his power to the butchery of indiscriminate execution, favoured by Lord Norbury and other Irish judges proverbial for severity ; inflexibly just, he opposed the system of grand-jury jobbing, which had been the source of much extortion and oppression to the Irish peasants ; refined and almost fastidious in his tastes, he shunned all contact with Irish factions, and, save when engaged in his judicial functions, lived a life of almost perfect literary seclusion.

In the days of the Catholic Association, when liberality was rare on the bench, when a merciful judge was stigmatized as a patron of insurgents by the zealots of the Ascendancy, and when a profession of friendship to his Catholic brethren caused a Protestant to be regarded as a renegade, O'Connell and his associates carried their praises of Baron Smith to the very excess of adulation. Less extravagant in their praise, but more sincere in their attachment, the liberal Protestants, and the Catholic gentry of Ireland venerated a judge whose life had been devoted to the advocacy and support of constitutional freedom. They shared his dislike of the mendicant agitation, by which Ireland was kept convulsed, for no discoverable purpose beyond swelling the tribute from the earnings of poverty to the purse of the agitator, and they thought that a protest against the folly of the people would come most worthily from an approved friend of the people.

In October, 1833, Baron Smith delivered an intemperate and ill-considered charge to the grand jury of the city of

Dublin; in it he sharply attacked the agitators, and assailed the government for not checking their proceedings. In every line of it were traces of an irritable temper, mortified feelings, and the acerbity produced by meditation on fancied wrongs. O'Connell took advantage of this imprudence: he made a formal complaint to parliament, and added a second accusation, that the judge came late into court, and during assizes tried prisoners at unreasonable hours. To the great astonishment of the country, and to the still greater mortification of the old Whigs of Ireland, ministers acceded to Mr. O'Connell's proposition, that Baron Smith's conduct should be investigated by a parliamentary committee. Mr. Littleton, who had succeeded Mr. Stanley as Secretary for Ireland, and Mr. Stanley himself, severely censured the charge, and spoke more harshly of Baron Smith than the occasion justified. In reply to them, Sir Robert Peel defended the character of the venerable judge. He said, "The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Stanley), in the course of his statement to the House, alluded to some motives arising from community of political feeling, which might possibly influence members of the House in forming their judgment in this case. For myself, sir, I cannot conceive the possibility of political feeling influencing any one on such an occasion. This learned judge, Mr. Baron Smith, never was a political partisan; there never was a man freer from the charge of being swayed as a judge by political partialities or feelings; even as a member of parliament, he never assumed the character of a partisan. He was the early and temperate advocate of concession to the Roman Catholics; he was a correspondent of Mr. Burke's on that subject; and so highly did Mr. Burke think of Baron Smith, of his early ability and judgment, that to him he addressed two of his ablest letters on it. With that learned judge my acquaintance is limited in the extreme; I fully participate with the

right honourable gentleman in the very great respect which he professed for him; and during the six years of my experience in Ireland, as Chief Secretary, in the course of which I was necessarily drawn into constant intercourse with the judges of that country, I do not recollect any judge who ever showed a greater desire, after his judicial duties in court were terminated, to examine every case with scrupulous accuracy, in order that if a prisoner could urge any ground for doubt as to the propriety of his conviction, or any reason for the mitigation of the punishment awarded to him, the circumstances might be fully weighed, and every advantage, consistent with justice, awarded to him. The learned baron is now charged with neglect of duty. But I could cite many instances, in which he has sacrificed his night's repose, that he might the more effectually discharge the duty of a humane and conscientious judge. There is not an allegation of corruption against him; I do not believe that there ever breathed a man freer from the taint of corruption, pecuniary or political. There is not an allegation of the slightest partiality; there is not an allegation, that in the performance of his duties in the administration of the criminal law, or as the distributor of civil justice between man and man, any corrupt motive or feeling of political partisanship ever influenced him. Let us see, then, whether there be even a plausible *primâ facie* case for inquiry into the conduct of this judge by a committee of the House of Commons. I dismiss every other topic that has been introduced into this discussion. I regret that any other has been introduced; for God knows, sir! the one we have now under consideration is of too great importance, the consequences with which it is pregnant are too alarming, to need aggravation by reference to any other point. We are called upon to appoint a select committee, for the purpose of inquiring into the conduct of Baron Smith. Sir, I say this, that if, on light and frivolous complaints, nay,

on plausible allegations of inadvertency or error, select committees of the House of Commons are to be appointed, for the purpose of examining into the conduct of the judges, or if those judges may be dragged before such tribunals, you may fill your statute-book with laws professing to secure their independence, but their independence is a hollow and miserable phantom. Yes, indeed, they may possibly continue independent of the crown—independent of the fountain of honour and mercy; but will they be independent of faction? will they be independent of a predominant popular party in this House, that assumes the right, under the hollow pretext of inquiry, to humiliate judges for the expression of opinions adverse to their own, by placing them as culprits at the bar? There are two allegations against Baron Smith on the present occasion. One is, of neglect of duty at the assizes of Armagh. If you admit the force of that charge, on what ground did you not institute an inquiry into it last session? You were cognizant of every fact that has now been brought before you—you had the returns in your possession—no new allegation, establishing neglect of duty on the part of Baron Smith, has been made. But now, eight or nine months after the documents were produced, after you tacitly admitted the innocence of Baron Smith by abstaining from all public notice of them—after you have, during the whole of the interval, permitted Baron Smith to remain in the administration of justice; now, will you think it just or decent to revive the neglected and forgotten accusation, and to bolster up its manifest and admitted weakness, by another and perfectly different charge, namely, that the judge introduced political matter into an address to a grand jury at Dublin? The introduction of political matter, observe! That is the whole of the additional charge. No allegation that the political matter was improper matter, for any other cause than simply that it was political. Why, sir, can the right honour-

able gentleman who spoke last, vote for a committee of inquiry into such a charge? can he, who says that there are many cases in which it may be the duty of a judge to introduce political matter into a charge—can he, who vindicates Chief Justice Bushe for the introduction of political matter into a charge—above all, can he, who quoted in this House, a charge of Baron Smith full of political matter, when that charge told in favour of his own opinions, and in defence of his own conduct—can he consent to the institution of an inquiry into the conduct of a judge, on the simple abstract allegation, that that judge has introduced political topics into a charge? Will the House of Commons imply that the introduction of such matter into a judge's charge, is, *primâ facie*, to be viewed with so much suspicion, that they must forthwith summon the judge from Ireland, and inquire into his conduct? We, sir, have no control over this judge, except by an address to the crown for his removal. Of us he is quite independent; and ought we to institute an inquiry, without a firm conviction that the result of that inquiry, if unfavourable to the judge, would warrant the extreme measure of an address to the crown? Take the case of these late trials at Armagh. Is it alleged that injustice has been done to any one? I concur with the right honourable gentleman in lamenting the lateness of the hour, at which some of the trials took place; but I repeat, that if on such allegations as this—that on a certain occasion, trials took place at an inconvenient and unseemly hour—on allegations implying no charge of partiality, of corruption, of grievous neglect—implying no moral delinquency of the lightest kind; the judge is to be brought, as a delinquent, before a committee of this House; he ceases to be a free agent—he ceases to be an impartial and independent judge; he is administering his functions under the rod and menace of a despot. Suppose a case of this kind. The judge, on going the assizes, finds

there has been a mistake as to the duration of a particular assize—a mistake for which he is no way responsible—that there are double the number of trials that were calculated on, when the period of the particular assize was fixed; he finds an unexpected demand upon his time; he finds also the assizes fixed for the next county for a certain day; and anxious to perform the duty of opening them at the prescribed period, he hesitates between the hardship of detaining in gaol the prisoners who are ready for trial in the first county, and of postponing these trials for months, and the opposite evil of trying them forthwith at late and inconvenient hours. He adopts the latter—no objection being urged by the counsel for the prisoners—no allegation being made of injustice done to any one. Such may have been the circumstances under which Baron Smith acted—under which, with the best intentions, he preferred the less of two evils, and sacrificed his own comfort and repose, that he might give to the accused parties the benefit of an early decision—perhaps an early acquittal. If this were the case, would it not be most unfair to cast a slur and imputation on the character of an aged and respected judge, by dragging him over from Ireland, to appear before a committee of this House? Say what you will—that this is a mere inquiry—that if acquitted, the judge will not be injured in character—these are the plausibilities by which you are covering an act of injustice; you must feel and know, that the authority of the judge is extinguished, the moment that he is summoned before you as a suspected and accused minister of justice; not only is his individual authority gone, but the blow you aim at him, strikes at the independence and authority of the judicial station. For God's sake, if you will establish this fatal precedent, establish it with those forms and solemnities, which by giving it a more impressive character, may designate it as a proceeding of an unusual and extraordinary

kind. Place the accused judge at the bar—let him stand here in the face of day—let him confront his accusers—and above all, let him know what it is with which he is really charged.

“The right honourable gentleman says, that one advantage of this proceeding will be, that we shall convince the people of Ireland that impartial justice is done to them. Yes; but let the justice you deal out, be really impartial. Take no step where justice is concerned, for the purpose of conciliating popular opinion in your favour; let us do our duty, regardless of what popular opinion may be, and depend on it, that if we do our duty, all the popular opinion that is worth retaining, will, in the end, be upon our side.

“I now come to the charge of this present session, which is brought to aggravate that of the last; to render more weighty that which was not before thought sufficiently heavy to merit the pains of an investigation, but which is now to be inquired into, when the evidence connected with it is probably weaker and more defective—when all the means of information are less easy of access than they would have been last session. The second charge is this—that the learned judge introduced political matter into his charge to a grand jury—an act which the right honourable gentleman himself admitted that, under certain circumstances, he was not only justifiable in doing, but that it formed part of the duty of a judge. And yet he objects to its being done in this case. Are we then, sir, going to define the terms in which the judges are to make their charges?—are we going to prescribe the exact limits within which it may be lawful or decorous for judges to introduce political matters into their public addresses?—are we about first to admit, that it may be quite right in the judges to warn ‘the deluded instruments of agitation?’ ‘Nay,’ says the right honourable gentleman, ‘it may be their duty to trace the evils of agita-

tion to their source, but then they must look carefully at the calendar—they must not presume to lift their eyes beyond the horizon of the county in which they are holding the assize—or, indeed, beyond the bar at which the prisoners are arraigned.’

“These may be the rules suited for ordinary times—difficult enough to be acted upon, even in such times. But what were the times in which Baron Smith was delivering this charge which furnishes the matter of his accusation? He was speaking at a time when we, his accusers and judges, had passed a bill that suspended and paralyzed the ordinary law in Ireland, and placed the liberties, if not the lives, of the people in that country, at the mercy of a military court-martial. I voted for that bill—I approved of it—I thought it required by a stern and overwhelming necessity. And if I did this, am I, in estimating the imputed delinquency of Baron Smith—am I to forget that he was acting under the very same circumstances, the very same impressions, which constitute my own vindication? There is one passage, in particular, of the learned baron’s charge, to which I must allude. The right honourable gentleman, the Secretary for Ireland, founded his acquiescence in this motion on that single passage—at least he referred to no other in detail to support his opinion. I will venture to say he has put a totally erroneous and most unjust construction on that passage. In the view which he takes of it, it represents Baron Smith speaking of the whole Catholic population in Ireland, as a body which had neither property nor rank, education nor intelligence; but which merely included the physical force and numbers of the country. Sir, I am content to rest the whole case on this issue. I ask, was Baron Smith speaking of the whole Roman Catholic body at that time? No; he was referring to the allegation of those whom he considered agitators, the authors of the whole evil; the

allegation, that the universal people of Ireland were enlisted in the conspiracy then existing. What was the substance and obvious purport of his observations on this point? That the unfortunate victims of agitation—that mass whose physical strength was referred to—not by Baron Smith, but by the agitators, referred to by them with triumph and exultation; that that mass, powerful and dangerous as it might be from numbers, and from its proneness to excitement by inflammatory harangues, that that mass did not contain amongst it, either the wealth, or the intelligence, or the respectability of Ireland. Was this untrue? Is it not a vindication, rather than an insult, to the Roman Catholic body? And let me ask, is it probable, that Baron Smith, one of the earliest and most consistent advocates for the Catholic claims—is it likely that he, the offspring of a Roman Catholic parent, would have spoken of the Roman Catholic body in tones so offensive, as those which the right honourable Secretary imputes to him? Baron Smith was speaking at a time when all law was suspended—when we ourselves had committed the greatest violation of law; and is it not a mockery to tell him, that it is his duty to warn ‘the deluded instruments of agitation;’ but that he must not allude to those exciting topics of the day which are inseparably connected with that agitation? Look at the state of Ireland when the charge was made; look at the circumstances arising from the agitation; look at the loss of life that had been suffered in that country; look at the effects of passive resistance to tithes—the collection of those tithes suspended, we ourselves finding it necessary to provide for those who had a legal claim to tithes, compensation from the public purse for the injustice which they were daily suffering. I have here, sir, the charge of Baron Smith which is complained of; it contains political matter, I admit; but how was it possible to allude to the state of that country; to ‘warn deluded

instruments of agitation,' (for I like repeating the words,) without reference to politics? Here is one of the addresses to the instruments of agitation on which Baron Smith was commenting; it expressly refers to the success which had attended tithe petitions; it calls on the people of Ireland to be up and stirring, and assures them, that by an organized system of petitioning for a repeal of the Union, they will ultimately effect that repeal. Now I ask the House, admitting that there was no criminal case before the learned baron, immediately connected with tithes—or with the repeal of the Union—yet if he had seen that we had been under the necessity of placing the liberty of the people of Ireland under the control of courts-martial; if he had seen that the consequence of tithe petitions, adopted as the means of agitation, had been that tithes had ceased to be paid, excepting only at the risk of blood; if he feared that the repeal petitions would produce similar effects; if he learnt from the ministers of the day, that they would, to use their own language, resist repeal to the death—was he, I ask, acting contrary to his duty when he raised his warning voice from the judicial bench, and exposed the objects of those who were labouring, through agitation, to promote the cause of repeal? Why was there no criminal case immediately before him? Because the avowed object of the repealers was to effect their object, not by direct violation of the law, but by the excitement of a spirit of insubordination, which, while it professed a specious submission to the law, should ultimately overbear the law.

“Baron Smith, therefore, though he had not before him any criminal charged with the express violation of a law connected with treason, or insurrectionary violence, did naturally express the same feelings of deep regret and just indignation, at the continuance of attempts to excite the people of Ireland, which the king himself had expressed

at the meeting of this parliament. And what is the language we ourselves have held? We assured the king—re-echoing his Majesty's own sentiments:—‘That we fully participate with his Majesty in the feelings of deep regret and just indignation with which his Majesty has seen the continuance of attempts to excite the people of that country to demand a repeal of the legislative Union; to express our thanks to his Majesty for the repeated assurance of his fixed and unalterable resolution, under the blessing of Divine Providence, to maintain this bond of our national strength and safety inviolate, by all the means in his Majesty's power; and to assure his Majesty that, in the support of this determination, his Majesty may rely with confidence on our zealous and effectual co-operation.’ And again we say to his Majesty—and to this passage I beg the attention of the House:—‘That his Majesty may rely upon our united and vigorous exertions, in conjunction with all the loyal and well-affected, in aid of the government, to put an end to a system of excitement and violence, which, while it continues, is destructive of the peace of society, and, if successful, must inevitably prove fatal to the power and safety of the United Kingdom.’

“We here expressly invite all the loyal and well-affected to co-operate with the law and the government in the maintenance of the legislative Union. If, sir, the first practical step we take is to bring Baron Smith before us, because he has discountenanced a system of excitement and violence—because, as a loyal and well-affected subject, he has anticipated our solemn appeal for his aid and co-operation, what, think you, will be the inference drawn by the people of Ireland from this direct contradiction between our professions and our acts? From this hour the cause of repeal will prosper—for never will the Irish people believe that they, who abandon to his enemies the judge who has

used the authority of his name and station to uphold the law, and to defeat the machinations of repealers, will not also, in the hour of trial, abandon that cause, for supporting which the judge has been made a victim."

Sir James Scarlett took the same view of the case as Sir Robert Peel, and even Sir James Graham voted against his colleagues in the ministry, declaring that he thought the motion a dangerous interference with the authority of the judges. The motion, however, was carried by a majority of 93, there being 167 in its favour, and 74 against it.

No sooner was the vote taken, than ministers discovered that by acceding to Mr. O'Connell's motion, they had placed both themselves and the House of Commons in a situation of great embarrassment, and had pledged themselves to a vexatious course of inquiry, which could end in nothing. Had the accusations brought against Baron Smith been established before the committee, the House of Commons could only have adopted one of two courses—either impeached the judge, or addressed the king to remove him. But no man, not even Mr. O'Connell himself, would venture to assert that sufficient grounds for an impeachment had been established. A judge is removable on the address, not of one, but of both Houses of Parliament, and every man knew that the Lords would not concur in any such harsh and unjustifiable proceedings as the House of Commons had adopted. Public opinion was loudly expressed in favour of the persecuted judge; the liberal Protestants of Ireland, though disheartened by ministerial neglect, remonstrated at the sacrifice of an upright judge to an intolerant agitator; and some members of the cabinet did not hide their displeasure at the course which had been adopted. The motion for inquiry had been carried on the 13th of February; on the 21st of the same month, Sir Edward Knatchbull proposed that the vote should be rescinded. Though Mr. Secretary

Stanley resisted the proposition with the utmost vehemence, it was carried by a majority of six; 165 voting for Sir Edward Knatchbull's motion, and 159 against it.

This incident greatly weakened the Whigs, and added immensely to the growing influence and popularity of Sir Robert Peel. It afforded him an opportunity of vindicating the most questionable portion of his early career, his Irish secretariship: while he held that office, Judge Fletcher had delivered a charge reflecting severely on the government of that day, and no attempt had been made to call him to account before parliament. This contrast seemed to justify the inuendo that the Whigs were truckling to O'Connell, and that they were willing to purchase the support of "the tail," by the sacrifice of the independence of the bench. Under all the circumstances, it is probable that the ministers themselves were not sorry to be extricated from the difficulties in which they had allowed themselves to be entangled, and that the success of Sir Edward Knatchbull's motion was not disagreeable to the cabinet.

O'Connell's next step was one to which he was most reluctantly forced by his followers; session after session he had shrunk from bringing the question of the Union under the consideration of parliament; though during every recess, he deluded his dupes in Ireland by specious promises of the speedy advent of repeal. Some of his associates became weary of filling subordinate parts in this melancholy farce, and Mr. Feargus O'Connor intimated that if O'Connell did not submit the question to the House of Commons, he would himself undertake the task. O'Connell thus urged forward, gave notice of two motions, one for a consideration of the act of Union, with a view to its repeal; the other for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the means by which the Union had been carried, and the effect of the measure upon Ireland. He proceeded only with the latter

of the two motions, which he submitted to the House on the 22nd of April. Ministers, anxious to make the decision of so important a question as solemn as possible, moved for a call of the House, which of course produced an unusually large attendance of members.

O'Connell's speech occupied more than six hours in the delivery, but was regarded, even by himself, as a signal failure. He entered into a long and not very accurate historical disquisition to disprove, what nobody had asserted, that England possessed any right of dominion over Ireland. He asserted that from the beginning of the seventeenth century, England and Ireland existed as two independent nations under one sovereign; but this was a glaring misrepresentation, for Poyning's Law had rendered the Irish parliament a dependent and provincial legislature, incapable of original action. Instead of being a nation, Ireland from 1614 to 1782, was legally and in fact a mere province, to such an extent that it was deemed treason to resist William III. after his title had been recognized by an English parliament, even though his title had been rejected by an Irish parliament.

In 1782, for the first time, Ireland obtained an independent parliament. On the glories of that epoch, O'Connell dwelt with an enthusiasm which his followers still strive to emulate; but they studiously avoid entering into the history of that independent parliament; its melancholy and disgraceful annals offer to us about two years of questionable virtue, and sixteen years of the grossest corruption and most iniquitous oppression to be found in the records of any country under heaven. Finally, he condemned the terms on which the Union had been made,—an argument which might prove the expediency of their revision, but which left untouched the propriety of their repeal.

In this long speech, O'Connell carefully avoided all the

topics on which he had been accustomed to dwell, when addressing popular assemblies in Ireland. To the mob he was accustomed to describe the Union as a contrivance for enriching England at the expense of Ireland. Such monstrous fallacies as that England sought to have the rents of absentees spent in London ;—that the Union caused the destruction of Irish manufactures ;—that it diminished the amount of employment ;—that it prevented the investment of capital in productive industry ;—and a host of similar economic fallacies, which formed the staple of agitation in Ireland, were passed over, when it was necessary to speak subject to the criticism of a reply. Mr. Spring Rice (since Lord Monteagle), and Mr. (since Sir) James Emerson Tennent answered Mr. O'Connell in speeches of equal length, both proving, by the evidence of facts, that Ireland had advanced more rapidly in every form of prosperity since the Union, than it had done at any former period of its history. Mr. Feargus O'Connor advocated the repeal of the Union in a speech which had the merit of being manly and candid ; though it was as discursive and declamatory as if it had been delivered in Conciliation Hall. The people of Ireland generally preferred O'Connor's manly assertion of opinion to O'Connell's special pleading ; and Mr. John Browne stated the opinion of most of the repealers outside and inside the walls of parliament, when he asserted that "the arguments brought forward by O'Connell, could not be considered by any rational man as advancing his cause." Mr. Lambert, the representative of the county of Wexford, damaged O'Connell still more by describing the mode in which he conducted the agitation in Ireland, and the disgraceful arts that were used to enforce the collection of the O'Connell tribute at Roman Catholic chapels. Mr. Sheil, with obvious pain, was compelled to become the advocate for O'Connell, and to profess unbounded admiration

for one whom he had too much reason to regard as a treacherous and secretly hostile associate. On the main question, his speech was singularly weak and inconclusive. His chief ground of complaint was, that Irishmen had been passed over in the distribution of official patronage: and as this evil has since been remedied in his proper person, it may fairly be concluded that his chief argument for repeal was rendered invalid when he became a Commissioner of Greenwich Hospital, and was still more triumphantly refuted when he was appointed Master of the Mint. But in the course of his speech, Mr. Sheil more than insinuated that repeal was only sought as an alternative for "Justice to Ireland," and he thus afforded O'Connell an excuse for abandoning repeal, which the agitator soon afterwards embraced with great eagerness.

Sir Robert Peel followed Mr. Sheil, in one of the most statesmanlike speeches ever delivered in the House of Commons. As the question of repeal must in all probability soon engage the attention of the present parliament, we shall quote largely from this, the best oration ever made on the subject. He began by saying—

"Sir, I am most desirous to consult the general wish and general convenience of the House. To myself it is a matter of entire indifference whether I speak now, or at a future period, if the House shall prefer an adjournment of the debate. My own opinion is certainly in favour of proceeding at present, in order that we may make some effective progress in a discussion which has already continued for four days. And if, sir, it should continue for thrice that period, and if ingenuity, if research, if eloquence, greater in a tenfold degree than that which has already signalized this debate, should be brought to bear upon its future stages, they would add nothing to the force of that conviction which compels my support of the Legislative Union. There are

truths which lie too deep for argument—truths, to the establishment of which the evidence of the senses, or the feelings of the heart, have contributed more than the slow process of reasoning; which are graven in deeper characters than any that reasoning can either impress or efface. When Dr. Johnson was asked to refute the arguments for the non-existence of matter, he stamped his foot upon the ground, and exclaimed, ‘I refute them thus.’ When Mr. Canning heard the first whisper in this House of a repeal of the Union, this was all the answer he vouchsafed—the eloquent and indignant answer, the tones of which are still familiar to my ear,—‘Repeal the Union! Restore the Heptarchy!’ Did Mr. Canning decline to argue with the proposer of repeal from the lack of argument? No; but because conviction of the folly of the proposal flashed upon his mind with an instinctive force, which required a more rapid vent than any that the tame and tardy processes of reasoning could supply. He overleaped the barriers of cautious demonstration, to arrive at the great truth with which his empathic exclamation was pregnant—that the repeal of the Union with Ireland was tantamount to the dissolution of the British empire; that it could only be assented to upon principles which resolved society into its first elements.

“I repeat, that I want no array of figures, I want no official documents, I want no speeches of six hours, to establish to my satisfaction the public policy of maintaining the Legislative Union. I feel and know that the repeal of it must lead to the dismemberment of this great empire, must make Great Britain a fourth-rate power of Europe, and Ireland a savage wilderness; and I will give, therefore, at once, and without hesitation, an emphatic negative to the motion for repeal. At the same time, I entirely approve of the course which has been taken by those who have led the opposition to the learned member’s (Mr.

O'Connell's) proposal. I rejoice that it should have been intrusted to two natives of Ireland, (Mr. Spring Rice and Mr. Emerson Tennent,) to correct the mis-statements, to expose the fallacies, of the learned member,—to demonstrate, by proofs that have been unassailed, and are unassailable, that whatever there is of Irish prosperity, is mainly attributable to the Union,—that the policy of the United Parliament towards Ireland has been just and liberal,—and that the common interests of the whole empire, but especially the interests of Ireland, forbid us to impair the Union. I rejoice, also, that a member for Scotland, (Sir D. Sandford,) deeply impressed with the benefits that country has derived from her connection with England, and enabled to bear the most recent testimony to the progressive increase of those benefits, has contributed his very able exertions to the common cause. It is right that the force of demonstration should be resorted to, for the satisfaction of those, (if any there be,) who entertain an honest doubt upon this subject, and that posterity should have upon record the overwhelming proofs by which the policy, the absolute necessity, of maintaining inviolate the Legislative Union, have been triumphantly established. The conviction in favour of that Union springs from every source from which conviction in the human mind can arise. Consult your senses—consult your feelings—consult reason, history, and experience; they all concur in enforcing the same truth;—consult your senses—look at the map—look at the geographical position of the British Islands, their relative position to the Peninsula, to France, to that great empire which is rising in the west on the opposite shores of the Atlantic? Can you entertain a doubt that it is necessary for their common security, that the defensive energies of these islands should be placed under the control and direction, not of one executive, liable to be thwarted

by the conflicting decisions of different legislative councils, but of one united, superintending, supreme authority, representing the general will, and provident of the general safety? Do not you feel convinced, by the evidence of sense, that there exists an obstacle to repeal, more powerful than any that mere argument can suggest? *Opposuit natura.* There is a physical necessity that forbids repeal."

On the subject of absenteeism, he remarked:—

"The learned gentleman says that the absenteeism is an admitted evil. No doubt; but the repeal of the Union is not an admitted remedy for that evil. It existed before the Union. It certainly has existed, it may have increased since; and, if it has, what is the cause? That accursed system of agitation which has disturbed all the relations, and poisoned all the intercourse, of society—which has prevented all application to the peaceful pursuits of industry—has barred the access of improvement from the introduction of English mechanical skill and English capital—and has banished from his home many a friend to Ireland, disgusted with the rancour of this eternal strife. He is threatened with danger to his life if he resides, and with the forfeiture of his estate, if he is absent; and then you wonder that men of property are not contented, and you complain that Ireland is not improved. The learned gentleman says that there is the greatest misery in Ireland at the very moment that the granaries are bursting with corn. Who denies the fact? But what connection is there between the admitted fact and the conclusion the learned gentleman draws from it, that the Union ought to be repealed? The learned gentleman himself, in the course of his speech this night, dwelt upon the miserable condition of English labourers, and the horrors of an English workhouse. But, surely, there are in England warehouses groaning with manufactures, and granaries

bursting with the produce of the land. There exist, then, in England, as well in Ireland, the extremes of abundance and of want—the same unequal distribution of worldly goods, of which the learned gentleman complains. Now there must be causes for this, so far as England is concerned, totally independent of the Union. What right, then, has the learned gentleman to conclude that the same state of things in Ireland was either caused by the Union, or would be remedied by its repeal?”

In reply to the demand for a separate and independent parliament, he said :—

“ You demand a separate and independent parliament for Ireland. A separate one you may have, an independent one you cannot. You never had an independent parliament. You never can have one consistently with the sovereignty of the British crown, and the connection with the island of Great Britain. If you attempt to revive that system of government which, after the completest evidence of its failure, the Union abolished, you may take your choice between these evils for Ireland—a paralyzed king or a corrupt parliament. No, sir, I am wrong, you will not have the choice between those evils—you will have the concurrent infliction of the two, for they are quite consistent, if not inseparable: you will have both a paralyzed king and a corrupt parliament. Re-establish the separate legislature, and the remaining tie—the golden band of common sovereignty, as you are pleased to call it—will be no band of gold; it will be a band of iron and miry clay, the foul mixture that betokened in other times a divided kingdom. Sir, the whole question is concluded, if these positions can be proved—that Ireland never had, and that she never can have, consistently with British connection, an independent parliament. It will be conceded to me, I apprehend, that upon the principle, *corruptio optimi, pessima*—

the semblance of independence without the reality, would be nothing but an evil and a curse, cheating with a vain mockery the country upon which it is inflicted, and bringing into general disrepute and shame the character of representative government. Now, let us first define what constitutes, at least what are essential conditions to the independence of a separate legislative body in Ireland. Such a body cannot, I apprehend, pretend to the character of independence, unless it possess, first, control over the executive authority of the state, in so far as that authority may act within the limits, or may directly affect the interests, of Ireland; and, secondly, control over the public purse of Ireland, involving complete power over the taxation and expenditure of that country. Now, first, as to control over the executive. How was such control provided for under the boasted arrangement of 1782—that arrangement which is described as having been so perfectly satisfactory that it ought to have been completely final? Why, sir, by an act passed by the Irish parliament itself, and constituting part of the arrangement of 1782, it was expressly provided, first, that no parliament should be holden in Ireland without a license for that purpose obtained under the great seal, not of Ireland, but of Great Britain; and that no bills passed by the parliament of Ireland should have the force of law within Ireland, until they were returned into that country without alteration, under the great seal of Great Britain. Now, if the king was king of Ireland in the same sense in which he was king of Great Britain, and if his authority in Ireland was an independent authority, controlled only by an Irish legislature, why was not the great seal of Ireland employed to warrant the holding of Irish parliaments, and to certify the passing of Irish bills, instead of the great seal of England? Functions of vital importance to Irish interests were thus committed to a

British minister; and where was the corresponding control over that minister which ought to have been possessed by an independent legislative body? The Chancellor of Great Britain had the express power to paralyze the whole Irish legislature, for he had the power by law to prevent the operation of any bill whatever, whether it related to matters of the first importance, or to matters of mere local concern. It is no doubt foolish to speculate on the extreme abuse of such a power. But suppose it was exercised under an honest *bonâ fide* impression of the justice and necessity of its exercise, in what manner could the British Chancellor be made amenable to the Irish parliament?

“Now let us consider the constitution of an Irish government acting in concurrence with a separate legislature in Ireland. Is that government to be appointed by the crown, independently of the advice of the British minister; or to be appointed by the advice of the British minister, and to act in cordial co-operation and concert with him? If it is to be appointed independently of him, who is to be responsible for its selection? and where is the man who will undertake as minister the charge of conducting public affairs in this country, and of preserving a good understanding with Ireland,—if there is to be in Ireland not only an independent legislature, but an executive authority totally independent of the British minister, acting on its own separate responsibility, and giving to the king of Great Britain separate advice? Does any rational man believe that such a state of things could endure in peace for a month? Take then the other alternative. Let the Irish government be appointed, as at present, on the advice and responsibility of the British minister. It will then form a part—a subordinate but intimate part—of the general government. The same spirit will influence all its acts, and direct all its councils. But the general

government, and the Irish government as a part of it, must possess the confidence of the British parliament. That confidence is a condition absolutely essential to its existence. But it is a condition also essential to the existence of the Irish government, that it must conciliate the good-will of the Irish parliament, a legislative body equally independent with the British. Now it appears even at present no very easy matter to reconcile the action of the executive with the concurrent confidence of one House of Lords and one House of Commons; and, by way of simplifying the process of government, we are to introduce two new elements into the system,—namely, an Irish House of Lords, and a reformed Irish House of Commons; and then we are to expect from the British minister that he will so regulate his course of legislation and government, that it shall command the assent and confidence of four independent legislative bodies, guarding respectively, in two different countries, those interests which the advocates of repeal pronounce to be separate, and often conflicting interests.”

His peroration was a noble union of eloquence and statesmanship; viewed merely as a piece of oratory, it ranks among the first productions of modern times, while the great principles it enunciates are of enduring importance:—

“One more appeal, and one only, I will make to the House. It is to their feelings, perhaps, rather than to their cold unimpassioned judgment; but the foundations of society and of civil government are weak indeed, unless they repose upon the warm feelings of the heart, as well as upon the dictates of sober reason.

“Thirty-three years have now elapsed since the passing of the act of Union—a short period, if you count by the lapse of time; but it is a period into which the events of

centuries have been crowded. It includes the commencement and the close of the most tremendous conflict which ever desolated the world, in the course of which many ancient dynasties were overthrown, and every country of continental Europe, with scarcely a single exception, was exposed to invasion and the occupation of a hostile force. Notwithstanding the then recent convulsions in Ireland—notwithstanding the dissatisfaction expressed with the Union—the United Empire, that had been incorporated only three years before the commencement of the war, escaped the calamities to which other nations were exposed. The extravagant and unreasoning ambition of Napoleon, which sent half a million of men across the continent to the invasion of Russia, never ventured to assail even the weakest point of these countries, lying within a few hours' sail of the shores of France. In our gallant armies no distinction of Englishmen and Irishmen was known; none of the vile jealousies which this motion, if successful, would generate, impaired the energies which were exerted by all in defence of a common country. That country did not bestow its rewards with a partial hand; it never inquired the place of birth of the heroes on whom it lavished its admiration and gratitude; it did not, because they were Irishmen, pay a less sincere or less willing homage to the glorious memory of a Ponsonby and a Pakenham. The benefit to both parts of the empire was reciprocal. We gained the full contribution of Irish valour and Irish genius; and to Irish valour and Irish genius was opened the arena of the world, and they expanded with the new and boundless horizon. Castlereagh and Canning fought in the same ranks with Pitt; and Grattan took his place, in the great contests of party, by the side of Fox. The majestic oak of the forest was transplanted, but it shot its roots deep in a richer and more congenial soil. The glowing eloquence of Grattan

lost nothing of its spirit; but it was chastened by a milder wisdom and a more comprehensive benevolence, that commanded not merely the applause, but the affectionate esteem, even of political opponents. Above all, to an Irishman—to that Arthur Wellesley, who, in the emphatic words of the learned gentleman, (Mr. Sheil,) ‘eclipsed his military victories by the splendour of his civil triumphs,’—to him was committed, with the unanimous assent and confidence of a generous country, the great and glorious task of effecting the deliverance of the world.

“The peace which was conquered by the sword of Wellington was settled and confirmed by the patient and conciliatory wisdom of Castlereagh. An Irishman was selected to represent in the congress of Europe that united empire, which, fifteen years before, had been incorporated mainly through his own undaunted exertions; and, sir, there was not one British heart throughout the land that was defiled by the base and sordid spirit of national jealousy—that recollected, with a grudging and envious feeling, that the great parts that were then acting on the theatre of the world, were committed, not to Englishmen, but to Irishmen. Oh! sir, who is that Irishman who can review these events—who can reflect on the glorious interval that passed between the day when his own countryman, the Duke of Wellington, stood with his back to the sea on the rocks of Lisbon, and saw before him the whole of Europe lying prostrate in subjugation and despondency—and that day when, having never paused in the career of victory, he had broken every fetter, and had turned despair into triumph and into joy? Who is that Irishman, who, recollecting these things, has the spirit and the heart to propose that Ireland shall be defrauded for the future of her share of such high achievements—that to her the wide avenues to civil and military glory shall be hereafter closed—that

the faculties and energies of her sons shall be for ever stunted by being cramped within the paltry limits of a small island? Surely, sir, we owe it to the memory of the illustrious brave, who died in defending this great empire from dismemberment by the force and genius of Napoleon, at least to save it from dismemberment by the ignoble enemies that now assail it.

“ In conclusion, let me entreat the House to bear in mind that the consideration is not whether you shall re-establish the state of things which existed before the Union, but whether you shall sever a connection that has subsisted for the third part of a century, and violently disturb the new relations that have grown up in the confidence that the Union was indissoluble. The question whether the Union ought to have taken place is perfectly distinct from the question whether, having taken place, it ought to be dissolved. Measures have been enacted in the interval, Catholic emancipation, and parliamentary reform, constituting changes in the state of society in Ireland, which never, probably, would have been contemplated, never, certainly, could have been safely adopted, had Ireland retained her separate legislature. Those changes oppose new obstacles in addition to all to which I have before referred, to the measure of repeal. They will aggravate every danger with which the system of government that existed prior to the Union was pregnant. They will destroy every check upon the influence of numbers and physical strength, as opposed to the influence of property, and station, and character. Beware how you act in the presumptuous confidence that you can restore, by artificial devices, the equilibrium that has been thus disturbed—that you can launch the new planet into the social system—can set bounds to its libations—can so adjust the antagonist forces which are to determine its orbit, that it shall neither be drawn back into

violent contact with the mass from which it has been severed, nor flame through the void of space a lawless and eccentric meteor. To do this is far beyond the grasp of your limited faculties—far beyond any intelligence, save that of the Almighty and Omniscient Power which divided the light from the darkness, and ordained the laws that regulate, in magnificent harmony, the movements of countless worlds.”

The debate was protracted for some nights longer, but after Sir Robert Peel’s speech, all interest in it was at an end. On the 29th of April, the House divided, when there appeared for the motion 38, against it 523—giving a majority of 485. The same majority adopted an address to the king, pledging the House “to maintain unimpaired and undisturbed, the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, as essential to the strength and stability of the empire,” and in this address the Lords concurred by a unanimous vote.

Ministers in opposing the demand of the Irish agitators for a repeal of the Union, carried with them the sense and feeling of the English people, and the support of nearly all the men of property and intelligence in Ireland. But through the debate there were manifestations of a feeling that the Irish sought repeal only as a means to an end, and that however objectionable the means might be, the end was not destitute of a foundation in justice. Throughout the debate, the Irish Church had been set forwards as a crying grievance; the more ardent of the English dissenters joined the repealers in demanding that it should be disestablished; more moderate men, including several members of the cabinet, thought that its revenues might be advantageously curtailed, and that the savings thus effected, might be applied to national purposes. Signs of dissension in the cabinet on this important question were obvious,

whenever incidental debates arose on the presentation of petitions.

On the 27th of May, Mr. Ward, the member for Sheffield, brought the subject before the House, by moving—"That the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland exceeds the spiritual wants of the Protestant population; and that, it being the right of the state to regulate the distribution of church property in such manner as parliament may determine, it is the opinion of this House, that the temporal possessions of the church of Ireland ought to be reduced." The motion was seconded by Mr. Grote, one of the members for the City of London. No sooner had he concluded, than Lord Althorp rose to request the House to adjourn, in consequence of circumstances which had just come to his knowledge. The debate was accordingly adjourned to the 2nd of June.

The motion of Mr. Ward could not be met by a direct negative, for several of the ministers had previously declared their adhesion to the principles which it involved; neither could it be accepted, for a large section of the cabinet maintained the inviolability of church-property. It was therefore proposed that a commission should be issued to examine into the relations between the Protestant establishment in Ireland, and the spiritual wants of the Protestant population. Such a commission necessarily implied, that if a surplus of revenue should be found to exist, this surplus should be dealt with on Mr. Ward's principles. The consequence was, the resignation of Mr Stanley, Sir James Graham, the Duke of Richmond, and the Earl of Ripon. Their places were supplied by the Marquis of Conyngham, the Earl of Carlisle, Lord Auckland, and Mr. Spring Rice: some minor changes were made at the same time; and what the cabinet lost in ability, was compensated by a gain in unity and consistency.

But this was not the only difficulty of the ministry; on

the 28th of May, the Archbishop of Armagh, accompanied by some other prelates, presented to the king an address signed by 1,400 dignitaries and clergymen, against hasty innovations in the church. William IV., instead of a formal and written reply, addressed the prelates in a speech of great feeling and vehemence, declaring his "firm attachment to the church, and his resolution to maintain it." In conclusion, he thus pointedly alluded to Mr. Ward's motion. "I have spoken more strongly than usual, because of unhappy circumstances that have forced themselves upon the observation of all. The threats of those who are enemies to the church, make it more necessary for those who feel their duty to the church to speak out. The words which you hear from me are indeed spoken from my mouth, but they flow from my heart."

When the debate was renewed, the preceding circumstances gave it unusual interest. Mr. Lambert and several other members declared that the king's recent declaration furnished an additional reason for pressing the motion. Ministers strongly insisted on the necessity of previous inquiry; while Sir Robert Peel and the Conservative members, equally condemning Mr. Ward's proposal and the ministerial commission, taunted the ministers for not meeting the motion by a direct negative. The ministerial plan of a royal commission was carried by a majority of three to one; but it neither satisfied the church reformers, nor diminished the alarms of zealous churchmen. In the House of Lords the commission was severely reprobated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of London and Exeter, and a great number of lay peers. The question of appropriation became the leading topic of discussion in both Houses; it threw into confusion the ministerial plan for changing Irish tithe into a rent-charge, and it would probably have caused a new derangement

of the ministry, had not that event been produced by another cause.

A modified renewal of the coercion bill of the preceding year was proposed in the House of Lords; the clauses which provided for the trial of offenders in certain cases by courts-martial were omitted, but the powers for preventing meetings of a dangerous character were retained. As it was by holding such meetings that O'Connell held his sway, he was enraged at the continuance of these restrictions, and when a vacancy occurred in the county of Wexford, he addressed a letter to the electors, in which he inveighed against the Whigs with more than his usual virulence and violence. Mr. Littleton, (since Lord Hatherton,) who was then Secretary for Ireland, alarmed by such a declaration of hostility, sought an interview with Mr. O'Connell, and confidentially communicated to him that the Irish government would not press for a renewal of the restrictive clauses on public meetings. In fact, secret influence had been exerted to induce the Marquis of Wellesley, the Lord-Lieutenant, to write to Earl Grey, that these clauses were unnecessary. The premier, however, who clearly saw that the agrarian outrages of Ireland were natural results of the seditious lessons taught by the political agitators, adhered to these clauses as being really the most valuable portions of the bill. There was a division in the cabinet on the subject, but Earl Grey's views were adopted by the majority.

On the 3rd of July, two days after the coercion bill as adopted by the cabinet had been introduced into the House of Lords, Mr. O'Connell inquired "whether the bill, in its present shape, had been advised and called for by the Irish government?" Not receiving a satisfactory answer, he again asked Mr. Littleton whether it was *his* intention to support the measure; and on receiving an affirmative answer, he charged the Irish secretary with having practised deception

*retirement
of Grey*

on him. This led to a scene of angry expostulation, explanation, and recrimination, during which Mr. Littleton and Mr. O'Connell pledged their personal honour to directly opposite statements. Lord Althorp found his position so painful, that he sent in his resignation; and Earl Grey believing it impossible to proceed without the aid of Lord Althorp, gave in his resignation also; and thus the great leader of reform retired from office in the second year of the first reformed parliament.

Under ordinary circumstances, the resignation of the head of the cabinet involves the dissolution of the cabinet itself. Lord Brougham, however, induced his colleagues to persevere under a new leader: Lord Melbourne became premier, and was succeeded in the Home Office by Lord Duncannon, whose place at the Woods and Forests was supplied by Sir John Cam Hobhouse. A coercion bill, omitting the disputed clauses, was passed rather hastily through parliament; but the measure for the settlement of Irish tithes was rejected by the House of Lords.

But it was not on Irish questions alone that ministers had to encounter increasing hostility from the Established Church. Their willingness to make concessions to the dissenters, and particularly to grant them the privilege of graduating at Oxford or Cambridge, produced violent opposition from the great majority of the prelates and clergy. Ministers, aware of the prejudices existing on this subject, were not anxious to press the matter; they wished rather to have it discussed on the presentation of petitions, and to trust to the gradual effect of reason and argument in abating prejudice. But the dissenters were not satisfied with this course, and a bill for opening the universities was introduced by Mr. G. W. Wood, the member for South Lancashire.

The supporters of the measure dwelt chiefly on the

injustice of excluding a large proportion of British subjects from the honours, privileges, and advantages conferred legally by University degrees. The chief argument against the proposition was its tendency to disestablish the Church of England. Among the most able supporters of the measure was Mr. (afterwards Lord) Stanley, and certainly the most powerful of its opponents was Sir Robert Peel. He dwelt strongly on the implied promise of not interfering with the establishment made when the dissenters and Roman Catholics were admitted to the full privileges of the constitution in 1828 and 1829, and thus concluded:—

“In all the various discussions which we have had, as well upon the measure of Roman Catholic relief, as upon the repeal of the acts affecting dissenters, the whole of the questions in each instance were confined to civil and political privileges. There never was the slightest intimation that the removal of those disabilities would lead to further demands, and lay a good ground for ulterior claims: their warmest advocates, Mr. Fox and Mr. Grattan, never held the opinion, that when the disabilities of the Roman Catholics were removed, and the grievances of the dissenters were redressed, the state should, in consequence thereof, be precluded from maintaining an established religion. Such an opinion, such a wish, has never been expressed by any of the great men who at various periods have come forward as the warm and zealous advocates of a repeal of the civil disabilities under which some portion of our fellow-subjects formerly laboured; and I contend, not on the narrow ground, that as a member of the church I am therefore anxious to sustain the church, not on the sordid and selfish ground that to the present members of the church should be limited all the advantages of the church; but I contend, for the common benefit of all classes within this realm, for the benefit of all classes and denominations of Christians,

dissenters as well as members of the Church of England, that there is an inestimable advantage in an established church for the purpose of protecting us from superstition on the one hand, and from fanaticism on the other—for promoting the decent observance of divine worship, and for the purpose of securing to us a continuance of that tolerant system which, I will venture to say, the Church of England, before all other churches in the world, has most fostered and encouraged. Upon all these grounds, I contend, that for the benefit of the community at large, no matter what their various forms of religious belief, it is absolutely necessary that we should maintain within this kingdom the inviolability of the Established Church. The right honourable gentleman, the late Secretary for the Colonies, I know to be one of these. I know him to be as anxious to maintain the inviolability of the Established Church as I am; and the only difference between the right honourable gentleman and myself exists, not in our pursuing different objects, but in our not agreeing as to the best mode of obtaining what we pursue in common. If my construction of this bill be right—if you mean to send this measure down to both Universities, overturning their privileges, invading their corporate rights, undertaking, on the part of parliament, the management of that discipline which heretofore has been administered exclusively by the Universities themselves—if you do this, (and if my construction of the bill be right, these are the objects you will accomplish by it,) I say that you will be ruining the Universities as schools of religious instruction, and thereby be striking a fatal blow at the integrity of the Established Church. What is meant by the term ‘established church,’ or ‘established religion?’ It is not the stipend attached to the performance of religious duties—it is not the value of the living which a minister of the church may hold; it is merely that legis-

lative recognition of one particular form of religion by the state, which it declares shall be the established religion of the country, and which, as the established religion, shall have preference before all other forms of religion. But if, instead of affording it that preference, you say that the Universities which have the education of its ministers shall not have the right to insist upon their students attending either upon divine service, or to any course of religious instruction which can interfere with the prejudices of the dissenters who may be admitted within these walls; if you take this course with respect to the Universities, I say that you are depriving the Established Church of one of the greatest advantages to which, as the disseminator of the doctrines of the recognized religion of the land, it has an undoubted and indisputable claim. For these reasons I think that if this bill be allowed to pass into a law, if you discountenance the Universities as schools of religious instruction—if you entitle the dissenters to enforce these claims by means of a *mandamus* from a court of law—and if you put an end to the connection at present subsisting between the church and the Universities, you will be doing an act of infinite prejudice to the established religion of the country, without, in my opinion, achieving any material or substantial benefit for the dissenters.”

There would have been more weight in these arguments if a uniform system had existed in the three national Universities; but in Dublin dissenters are allowed to enter and graduate; in Cambridge they are permitted to enter, but not to graduate, in Oxford alone is entrance refused them. It is absurd then to speak of an established principle when such discrepancies exist. Had the question of admissibility stood alone, the dissenters would have made out a very strong case; but they urged forward several other demands, such as the abolition of church-cess, and the liberty of having mar-

riages performed by their own ministers, which, however just in themselves, assumed an alarming aspect when they were demanded simultaneously, especially as some of their advocates declared that they never would be completely satisfied until there was a total separation of the church from the state.

One of the most important measures of the session was the New Poor Law, by which a Board of Commissioners was created, with power to establish a uniform system of relief throughout the country, and to check the enormous abuses which had arisen in several localities. Sir Robert Peel took no active part in forwarding this great measure, though he gave it general support. In one of the incidental discussions, in which the change of the Poor Laws was considered in its relations to agricultural distress, O'Connell had the imprudence to propose a compulsory reduction of the interest on the national debt, and to justify this robbery of the fundholders by describing national faith as mere cant. Sir Robert Peel castigated the unprincipled proposal with just severity, and this tended to raise him in the estimation of the country, for all reasonable men had been disgusted and exasperated by the vulgar violence of O'Connell and the delegates whom he had nominated to parliament. On the other hand, the concessions which the ministers made to win the parliamentary support of the Irish agitators greatly damaged their reputation, and weakened their influence with the people of England.

The session of 1834 began in strength, and ended in weakness; the breaking up of the cabinet destroyed the confidence which the reflecting portion of the nation had begun to place in the Whigs. Even ardent Reformers felt indignant at seeing Earl Grey sacrificed to O'Connell, and their indignation was increased by the truculent and menacing letters which the agitator published in the autumn, assailing

the Whigs with unmeasured abuse, and affecting to dictate to them the measures which ought to be adopted in Ireland. Lord Brougham's conduct had no small influence in bringing the ministry into contempt. He spent the autumn in traversing different parts of Scotland, making speeches wherever hearers were to be found. Such oratorical itinerancy would not have been decorous in so high a functionary as the Lord Chancellor, even if the matter uttered had been unobjectionable; but Lord Brougham gave vent to such a mass of incongruities, inconsistencies, and absurdities, that he covered himself and his colleagues with ridicule. At length he wounded the feelings of the king, by declaring at Inverness that he would write by post to his majesty, to tell him of the loyal sentiments of the company, and the reception that had been given to loyal toasts.

Under these circumstances it is not wonderful that the death of Earl Spencer, which removed Lord Althorp to the House of Lords, precipitated that dissolution of the ministry which, in the natural course of things, could not have been long delayed. This event occurred on the 10th of November; on the 14th Lord Melbourne waited on the king at Brighton, to submit to his majesty the changes in official employments which the death of Earl Spencer had rendered necessary. William IV. strongly complained of the course taken by Lord Brougham; he disapproved also of the selection of members of the cabinet who were to frame the Irish Church Bill; and he finally declared that he had resolved to entrust the administration to other hands. Lord Melbourne heard the decision with his usual equanimity, and was himself the bearer of the king's letter to the Duke of Wellington, inviting his grace to form a new cabinet.

CHAPTER XI.

SIR ROBERT PEEL'S FIRST ADMINISTRATION.

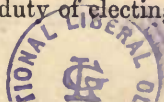
AN earthquake would have created less surprise and confusion in London than the brief announcement in the *Times* on the morning of the 15th of November, that "the Whig ministers were out," and that "the Queen had done it all." This characteristic piece of imprudence was generally attributed to Lord Brougham, who showed a strange taste in selecting the *Times* as the organ of his communications. That paper, which had zealously and powerfully supported the Whigs during the arduous struggle for Reform, had greatly cooled in its friendship, on the secession of Stanley and Graham from the cabinet, and had gone into open opposition when Earl Grey was virtually sacrificed to O'Connell. The Chancellor was the chief object of its hostility; his vagaries in Scotland were recorded with bitter mockery and sarcasm; he was ridiculed as a mountebank, and stigmatized as a mere pretender. Yet to this paper was communicated the text for a galling comment, which dealt very harshly with the fallen ministers, and more especially with the erratic Chancellor.

The Duke of Wellington declined the offer of the premiership for himself, and recommended the king to apply to Sir Robert Peel. So little had the crisis been anticipated, that Sir Robert and Lady Peel had gone to Italy in October, intending to spend the winter in a southern climate. A spécial messenger overtook the right honourable baronet in Rome, and astounded him by the unexpected intelligence

of his having been selected to preside over the government of his country. He quitted Rome on the following morning, and travelling with the utmost speed, reached London on the 9th of December. In the interval the Duke of Wellington, aided by Lord Lyndhurst, had carried on the public business—a monopoly of office which afforded scope for some good-natured ridicule and for some constitutional objections. Sir Robert had an audience with the king on the day of his arrival, and accepted the office of prime minister. One of his first steps was to invite Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham to be members of the new administration; they declined the offer, much to his annoyance and their own subsequent regret. Compelled to select as his colleagues those who had been the opponents of the Reform Bill, Sir Robert Peel unwillingly became the head of a cabinet, which seemed by its composition pledged to resist all improvement. Aware of the unfavourable impression thus produced on the public mind, he issued his celebrated Address to the Electors of Tamworth—a document which, as an exposition of public principle at an important crisis, must ever hold a place in the records of the country:—

“Gentlemen,—On the 26th of November last, being then at Rome, I received from his majesty a summons wholly unforeseen and unexpected by me, to return to England without delay, for the purpose of assisting his majesty in the formation of a new government. I instantly obeyed the command for my return; and on my arrival I did not hesitate, after an anxious review of the position of public affairs, to place at the disposal of my sovereign any services which I might be thought capable of rendering.

“My acceptance of the first office in the government terminates, for the present, my political connection with you. In seeking the renewal of it, whenever you shall be called upon to perform the duty of electing a representative in par-



liament, I feel it incumbent upon me to enter into a declaration of my views of public policy, as full and unreserved as I can make it, consistently with my duty as a minister of the crown.

“ You are entitled to this, from the nature of the trust which I again solicit, from the long habits of friendly intercourse in which we have lived, and from your tried adherence to me in times of difficulty, when the demonstration of unabated confidence was of peculiar value. I gladly avail myself also of this, a legitimate opportunity, of making a more public appeal—of addressing, through you, to that great and intelligent class of society, of which you are a portion, and a fair and unexceptionable representative—to that class which is much less interested in the contentions of party than in the maintenance of order and the cause of good government, that frank exposition of general principles and views, which appears to be anxiously expected, and which it ought not to be the inclination, and cannot be the interest, of a minister of this country to withhold.

“ Gentlemen,—The arduous duties in which I am engaged have been imposed upon me through no act of mine. Whether they were an object of ambition coveted by me—whether I regard the power and distinction they confer, as any sufficient compensation for the heavy sacrifices they involve—are matters of mere personal concern, on which I will not waste a word. The king, in a crisis of great difficulty, required my services. The question I had to decide was this—Shall I obey the call? or shall I shrink from the responsibility, alleging as the reason, that I consider myself, in consequence of the Reform bill, as labouring under a sort of moral disqualification, which must preclude me, and all who think with me, both now and for ever, from entering into the official service of the crown? Would it, I ask, be becoming, in any public man, to act upon such a principle?

Was it fit that I should assume, that either the object or the effect of the Reform bill has been to preclude all hope of a successful appeal to the good sense and calm judgment of the people, and so to fetter the prerogative of the crown, that the king has no free choice among his subjects, but must select his ministers from one section, and one section only, of public men?

“I have taken another course, but I have not taken it without deep and anxious consideration as to the probability that my opinions are so far in unison with those of the constituent body of the United Kingdom, as to enable me, and those with whom I am about to act, and whose sentiments are in entire concurrence with my own, to establish such a claim upon public confidence, as shall enable us to conduct with vigour and success the government of this country.

“I have the firmest conviction that that confidence cannot be secured by any other course than that of a frank and explicit declaration of principle—that vague and unmeaning professions of popular opinions may quiet distrust for a time, may influence this or that election, but that such professions must ultimately and signally fail, if, being made, they are not adhered to, or if they are inconsistent with the honour and character of those who make them.

“Now, I say at once that I will not accept power on the condition of declaring myself an apostate from the principles on which I have heretofore acted. At the same time, I never will admit that I have been, either before or after the Reform bill, the defender of abuses, or the enemy of judicious reforms. I appeal with confidence, in denial of the charge, to the active part I took in the great question of the currency—in the consolidation and amendment of the criminal law—in the revisal of the whole system of trial by jury—to the opinions I have professed, and uniformly acted

on, with regard to other branches of the jurisprudence of the country—I appeal to this as a proof that I have not been disposed to acquiesce in acknowledged evils, either from the mere superstitious reverence for ancient usages, or from the dread of labour or responsibility in the application of a remedy.

“But the Reform bill, it is said, constitutes a new era, and it is the duty of a minister to declare explicitly—first, whether he will maintain the bill itself, and, secondly, whether he will act upon the spirit in which it was conceived.

“With respect to the Reform bill itself, I will repeat now the declaration which I made when I entered the House of Commons as a member of the Reformed Parliament, that I consider the Reform bill a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question—a settlement which no friend to the peace and welfare of this country would attempt to disturb, either by direct or by insidious means.

“Then, as to the spirit of the Reform bill, and the willingness to adopt and enforce it as a rule of government: if, by adopting the spirit of the Reform bill, it be meant that we are to live in a perpetual vortex of agitation; that public men can only support themselves in public estimation by adopting every popular impression of the day—by promising the instant redress of anything which anybody may call an abuse—by abandoning altogether that great aid of government, more powerful than either law or reason, the respect for ancient rights, and the deference to prescriptive authority;—if this be the spirit of the Reform bill, I will not undertake to adopt it. But if the spirit of the Reform bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper, combining, with the firm maintenance of established rights, the correc-

tion of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances—in that case I can, for myself and colleagues, undertake to act in such a spirit and with such intentions.

“Such declarations of general principle are, I am aware, necessarily vague; but, in order to be more explicit, I will endeavour to apply them practically to some of those questions which have of late attracted the greater share of public interest and attention.

“I take, first, the inquiry into municipal corporations:—

“It is not my intention to advise the crown to interrupt the progress of that inquiry, nor to transfer the conduct of it from those to whom it was committed by the late government. For myself, I gave the best proof that I was not unfriendly to the principle of inquiry, by consenting to be a member of that committee of the House of Commons on which it was originally devolved. No report has yet been made by the commissioners to whom the inquiry was afterwards referred; and, until that report be made, I cannot be expected to give, on the part of the government, any other pledge than that they will bestow on the suggestions it may contain, and the evidence on which they may be founded, a full and unprejudiced consideration.

“I will, in the next place, address myself to the questions in which those of our fellow-countrymen, who dissent from the doctrines of the Established Church, take an especial interest.

“Instead of making new professions, I will refer to the course which I took upon those subjects when out of power.

“In the first place, I supported the measure brought forward by Lord Althorp, the object of which was to exempt all classes from the payment of church-rates, applying in lieu thereof, out of a branch of the revenue, a certain sum for the building and repair of churches. I never expressed, nor did

I entertain, the slightest objection to the principle of a bill of which Lord John Russell was the author, intended to relieve the conscientious scruples of dissenters in respect to the ceremony of marriage. I give no opinion now on the particular measures themselves ; they were proposed by ministers in whom the dissenters had confidence ; they were intended to give relief ; and it is sufficient for my present purpose to state that I supported the principle of them.

“ I opposed—and I am bound to state that my opinions in that respect have undergone no change—the admission of dissenters, as a claim of right, into the Universities ; but I expressly declared, that, if regulations, enforced by public authorities superintending the professions of law and medicine, and the studies connected with them, had the effect of conferring advantages of the nature of civil privileges on one class of the king’s subjects from which another was excluded—those regulations ought to undergo modification, with the view of placing all the king’s subjects, whatever their religious creeds, upon a footing of perfect equality with respect to any civil privilege.

“ I appeal to the course which I pursued on those several questions, when office must have been out of contemplation ; and I ask, with confidence, does that course imply that I was actuated by any illiberal or intolerant spirit towards the dissenting body, or by an unwillingness to consider fairly the redress of any real grievances ?

“ In the examination of other questions which excited public feeling, I will not omit the pension list. I resisted—and, with the opinions I entertain, I should again resist—a retrospective inquiry into pensions granted by the crown at a time when the discretion of the crown was neither fettered by law nor by the expression of any opinion on the part of the House of Commons ; but I voted for the resolution, moved by Lord Althorp, that pensions on the civil list

ought, for the future, to be confined to such persons only as have just claims to the royal beneficence, or are entitled to consideration on account either of their personal services to the crown, or of the performance of duties to the public, or of their scientific or literary eminence. On the resolution which I thus supported as a private member of parliament, I shall scrupulously act as a minister of the crown, and shall advise the grant of no pension which is not in conformity with the spirit and intention of the vote to which I was a party.

“Then, as to the great question of church reform. On that head I have no new professions to make. I cannot give my consent to the alienating of church property in any part of the United Kingdom from strictly ecclesiastical purposes. But I repeat now the opinions that I have already expressed in parliament, in regard to the church establishment in Ireland—that, if by an improved distribution of the revenues of the church, its just influence can be extended, and the true interests of the established religion promoted, all other considerations should be made subordinate to the advancement of objects of such paramount importance.

“As to church property in this country, no person has expressed a more earnest wish than I have done that the question of tithe, complicated and difficult as I acknowledge it to be, should, if possible, be satisfactorily settled by the means of a commutation, founded upon just principles, and proposed after mature consideration.

“With regard to alterations in the laws which govern our ecclesiastical establishment, I have had no recent opportunity of giving that grave consideration to a subject of the deepest interest, which could alone justify me in making any public declaration of opinion. It is a subject which must undergo the fullest deliberation, and into that deliberation the government will enter, with the sincerest desire to remove

every abuse that can impair the efficiency of the establishment, to extend the sphere of its usefulness, and to strengthen and confirm its just claims upon the respect and affections of the people.

“It is unnecessary for my purpose to enter into further details. I have said enough, with respect to general principles, and their practical application to public measures, to indicate the spirit in which the king’s government is prepared to act. Our object will be—the maintenance of peace—the scrupulous and honourable fulfilment, without reference to their original policy, of all existing engagements with foreign powers—the support of public credit—the enforcement of strict economy—and the just and impartial consideration of what is due to all interests—agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial.

“Whatever may be the issue of the undertaking in which I am engaged, I feel assured that you will mark, by a renewal of your confidence, your approbation of the course I have pursued in accepting office. I enter upon the arduous duties assigned to me with the deepest sense of the responsibility they involve, with great distrust of my own qualifications for their adequate discharge, but at the same time with a resolution to persevere, which nothing could inspire but the strong impulse of public duty, the consciousness of upright motives, and the firm belief that the people of this country will so far maintain the prerogative of the king, as to give to the ministers of his choice, not an implicit confidence, but a fair trial.—I am, gentlemen, with affectionate regard, most faithfully yours, ROBERT PEEL.”

The great principle of this address was, the maintaining of the Reform bill in its integrity, as “a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question,” including a promise of progressive reform in other departments of the state; but the specification of these further reforms was unquestionably

meagre and unsatisfactory. The professions were so much larger than the promises, that even moderate reformers perceived it with some feelings of dissatisfaction, while the Dissenters seemed to regard the mode in which their claims were treated as a positive insult. Of course, this address, though nominally an appeal to the electors of Tamworth, was intended for the nation at large, and more especially for the constituencies which had been newly enfranchised. Its contents were, therefore, discussed throughout the empire, and the first expression of discontent came from Ireland, which had not been mentioned in the document. The followers of O'Connell circulated a report, which probably some of them believed, that Peel was about to restore the ancient rule of the Protestant ascendancy, and the exultation shown by some of the less prudent of the Orange faction, gave an authority to this mischievous opinion, which was in truth utterly groundless. Such was the state of the public mind when parliament was dissolved on the 30th of December, and writs issued for a new election. The destruction by fire of the two Houses of Parliament, a short time before the dissolution, added not a little to the general excitement. For some time it was imagined that the fire was the work of some revolutionary incendiary, and, though this delusion was soon dispelled, it left an impression on the public mind, which rendered timid men indisposed to support the further progress of reform principles.

The result of the elections gave about a hundred new members to the Conservatives, exclusive of the party of Lord Stanley (nicknamed the Derby dilly), which refused to be identified with the Whig opposition. These victories, however, were chiefly achieved in the English counties and the smaller boroughs. London and all the metropolitan districts returned reformers ; but the Conservatives triumphed in the

provinces — Bristol, York, Leeds, Hull, Exeter, Newcastle, Warrington, and Halifax, sent new members to support the policy of Sir Robert Peel. In Scotland the strength of parties was very slightly varied by the election; but Ireland again returned a great majority of the followers of O'Connell. As the great agitator had entered into close alliance with the Whigs, his influence turned the scale in their favour, and gave them a small but sure majority over the new ministers.

It was resolved by the opposition to test their strength at the very first opportunity, and in consequence they determined to resist the re-election of Mr. Manners Sutton to the Speaker's chair. This was a proceeding of very questionable prudence and propriety: Mr. Manners Sutton had held the office of Speaker for eighteen years; the Whigs themselves had borne the strongest testimony to his impartiality and ability, by inviting him to preside over the first reformed parliament, in 1833; and his conduct during the two sessions that it lasted, had greatly added to his fame. On the other hand, Mr. Abercromby, who was proposed as his rival, though a lawyer of unquestionable ability, and a senator of spotless integrity, could set forward no special claims of fitness for the high office forced upon him by his friends. He very reluctantly consented to be put in nomination, and made no efforts of his own to secure his election.

As a practical contradiction to the assertion that they were opposed to all progress, the ministers, before the meeting of parliament, issued a commission for the purpose of considering the state of the Church in England and Wales, and of suggesting a plan of church-reform. The names of the persons selected as commissioners, did not, however, afford the public much hope of improvement, and doubts of the sincerity of the ministry were unfortunately increased by

some of their imprudent friends, who spoke of the commission as an extorted concession to public opinion.

Parliament assembled on the 10th of February : the attendance in the House of Commons was more numerous than had ever been witnessed, and the issue of the contest remained in doubt to the last moment. Mr. Manners Sutton was proposed by Lord Francis Egerton and Sir C. Burrell ; the proposers of Mr. Abercromby were Messrs. Dennison and Orde. The debate was remarkable chiefly for Lord Stanley's sharp attack on his former colleagues, and for Lord Dudley Stuart's adhesion to Mr. Manners Sutton in opposition to the reform-party, to which he belonged. On a division, there appeared for Mr. M. Sutton 306, and for Mr. Abercromby 316 ; so that the ministerial candidate was rejected by a majority of ten. As the majority was decided by the Irish and Scotch members, a very mischievous cry was raised by the ministerial papers, that the votes of Englishmen were neutralized and swamped by the Irish ; the repealers in Ireland took advantage of this blunder, and insisted, with great semblance of reason, that every objection made to the votes of Irish members in the Imperial legislature, was virtually an argument for giving Ireland a parliament of her own.

On the 24th of February, the Session was opened by the King in person : the royal speech was of unusual length, but it was at the same time vague and indefinite, so as to afford little scope for moving an amendment on the Address. Amendments were, however, moved in the Upper House, by Lord Melbourne, and in the Lower by Lord Morpeth. The debate in the Lords was rather tame, but that in the Commons was warm, animated, and vigorous. Sir Robert Peel, after having described the circumstances under which he took office, said—"With such prospects, I feel it to be my

duty—my first and paramount duty—to maintain the post which has been confided to me, and to stand by the trust which I did not seek, but which I could not decline. I call upon you not to condemn before you have heard—to receive at least the measures I shall propose—to amend them if they are defective—to extend them if they fall short of your expectations—but at least to give the opportunity of presenting them, that you yourselves may consider and dispose of them. I make great offers, which should not be lightly rejected! I offer you the prospect of continued peace—the restored confidence of powerful States, that are willing to seize the opportunity of reducing great armies, and thus diminishing the chances of hostile collision. I offer you reduced estimates, improvements in civil jurisprudence, reform of ecclesiastical law, the settlement of the tithe question in Ireland, the commutation of tithe in England, the removal of any real abuse in the Church, the redress of those grievances of which the Dissenters have any just grounds to complain. I offer you those specific measures, and I offer also to advance, soberly and cautiously, it is true, in the path of progressive improvement. I offer also the best chance that these things can be effected in willing concert with the other authorities of the State; thus restoring harmony, ensuring the maintenance, but not excluding the reform (where reform is really requisite) of ancient institutions. You may reject my offers—you may refuse to entertain them—you may prefer to do the same things by more violent means; but if you do, the time is not far distant when you will find that the popular feeling, on which you relied, has deserted you, and that you will have no alternative, but either again to invoke our aid, to replace the Government in the hands from which you would now forcibly withdraw it, or to resort to that pressure from without—to those measures of compulsion

and violence, which, at the same time that they render your reforms useless and inoperative, will seal the fate of the British Constitution."

These were large and liberal proffers; had they been made in 1830, it is probable that Earl Grey's administration would never have been formed; but in 1834 they were received by reformers with distrust and suspicion. O'Connell struck at the most tender part of the government, the encouragement it had given to the Orangemen in Ireland. "Who," said he, "are your allies in Ireland? Is there a man there who ever distinguished himself by a high and haughty, or a truculent and persevering animosity to the Catholic people of that country, that is not rallied round you? . . . I do not wish to speak with any harshness upon this subject, but I have heard the cry of exultation. I have seen the triumph—I have marked the altered mien—I have perceived the wall of separation raised between Protestant and Catholic more and more every day since the present government came into office." The amendment was carried by a majority of seven, and the ministers made no attempt to set it aside on the bringing up of the report.

Sir Robert Peel was now in a position somewhat similar to that of Mr. Pitt, when he undertook to conduct the government in the face of a hostile majority of the Commons; but Pitt was at the same time supported by the public opinion of the country, and knew that a dissolution would scatter the strength of his adversaries to the winds. Peel on the other hand was out-numbered in a parliament of his own calling, and would, in all probability, have been left in a smaller minority, had he ventured on the perilous experiment of a new dissolution. His policy was to avoid collision, and to do nothing which would justify his adversaries in provoking a hostile vote. From this cautious course, he

departed in one signal instance, by nominating the Marquis of Londonderry ambassador to the Court of Russia. Mr. Sheil brought this obnoxious appointment under the consideration of the House; it was severely reprobated, not merely by the liberals, but also by Lord Stanley and his friends, while many partisans of the government defended it with a feebleness which savoured of disapprobation.

The ministerial measure for settling the tithe question in Ireland, was to a great extent identical with that which they had rejected when brought forward by the Whigs in the preceding session. It included a grant to the clergy as a compensation for the arrears of tithes, which Mr. Hume severely reprobated—"This," said he, "is the first occasion on which a committee of the whole House has decided on a vote of a million of money with no notice whatever. It is bad enough to do it with notice; but to do it without notice is scandalous; it is an attempt to impose upon the public."

Sir Robert Peel, irritated by such a charge, indignantly asked, "Does the honourable gentleman mean to say, that in taking the course which I have taken upon the matter now under discussion, I am acting in a manner that is not consistent with the character of a man of honour?"

Mr. Hume replied, "I said, had I been in the situation of the right honourable baronet, I should not have acted as he has done. According to my idea of a man of honour, he should not take up and support a measure at one time, of which at another, and in similar circumstances, he was the strenuous opponent."

Sir Robert Peel, still more excited, again demanded, "Does the honourable member mean to say that I have acted inconsistent with the character of a man of honour? He knows the nature of the question—he knows the course I took last session—he knows the course which I have taken

this session—he knows both—now does he mean to apply to me those terms, that I have taken a course inconsistent with the conduct of a man of honour?”

Hume, with his usual coolness, replied, “I have no hesitation in saying, that as a political man, placed in the situation of the right honourable gentleman, I should not have adopted the same course of conduct as he has.”

With still greater warmth, Peel exclaimed, “I do not want a hypothetical case. I put a plain question to the honourable member for Middlesex.” Cries of “Order” put an end to the scene, and the premier seemed to be satisfied, but during the evening he sent the following letter to Mr. Hume, which certainly had too much the aspect of a challenge:—

“House of Commons, March 20th, Friday Evening.

“SIR,—In the course of the debate this evening, I understood you to make use of expressions of which the purport was, that I was pursuing a course of conduct in respect to the measure then under discussion, that was inconsistent with a man of honour.

“Thinking it probable that such expressions fell from you inconsiderately, and in the warmth of debate, I gave you the opportunity of recalling them by an appeal to you in the House.

“I could not with propriety pursue the subject further at the time, but I am confident you will feel that the expressions of which I complain are not consistent with the usages of parliament, and not warranted by the freedom of debate, and that you will therefore not hesitate to disavow them as applied to me.—I have the honour to be, sir, your obedient servant, ROBERT PEEL.”

Mr. Hume, like a man of sense, gave an explanation which was perfectly satisfactory, and there the matter should have ended. Mr. Roebuck, however, brought the subject before the House, and proposed that the letter should be censured as a breach of privilege. All parties protested against such

an ungenerous course of proceeding, and the motion was withdrawn, but not until Mr. T. Attwood, the eccentric member for Birmingham, had exposed himself to a sharp retort from the premier, which had the effect of restoring the House to good humour. Mr. Attwood said, "I would beg to remind the right honourable baronet of his own act, introduced about ten years ago, which I call the duel-repeal bill. The right honourable baronet ought not to have forgotten, what the House I am sure will remember, that he himself, about ten years ago, brought in a bill—a very good bill—to improve what is called Lord Ellenborough's Black Act, and which passed into a law, rendering it a capital felony for one gentleman to pull a trigger against another, or strike a man with a blunt instrument to do him bodily harm. That is the law of England. I hope the right honourable gentleman will not forget his own child—he ought to be proud of it."

To this strange speech Sir Robert Peel sarcastically replied, "The honourable member is himself guilty under the same act, because he certainly has inflicted pain on me with a blunt instrument."

The ministerial measures for a general commutation of tithes in England, and for authorizing the marriages of dissenters, were received with almost universal approbation. But their administration in Ireland was generally unpopular, partly because they could not control, though they sincerely regretted, several indecent ebullitions of Orange zeal, and partly because they insisted that the entire revenues of the Irish Established Church should continue to be applied exclusively to ecclesiastical purposes. The leaders of the opposition resolved to insist on the principle of appropriating the surplus revenues of the church to the extension of education, being well aware that the ministers would never consent to adopt such a principle, and must therefore resign, should

it be carried. Lord John Russell delayed the motion for some time, in the hope of receiving the report which the ecclesiastical commissioners, appointed by himself and his colleagues in the preceding year, had been instructed to prepare. Finally, he fixed the 30th of March for his motion, and also for a previous call of the House.

Lord John Russell, in his admirable speech, gave the following lucid exposition of the principle of appropriation :—
 “On what principle do we go? Upon no other than this—that it is useful for the purpose of religious instruction that there should be a re-distribution. And what do we come to? To a principle totally distinct from, and at variance with, every law by which private property is affected. I maintain we can only do that on the grounds of public expediency, of public right, and of public advantage. If then I show that public right, public expediency, and public advantage, require the application of some portion of these funds to works of religious education and charity, where, I would ask, is the distinction between them? and how can the right honourable gentleman and his colleagues pretend that they leave that property more sacred than I do? I confess that to my mind the right honourable gentleman and his colleagues have no ground to stand upon, and I cannot see how they keep themselves out of that great Serbonian bog to which Mr. Burke alluded—

“ ——— The great Serbonian bog,
 Betwixt Damietta and Mount Casius old,
 Where armies whole have sunk.”

On the one hand, they may stand on the notion of private property, and maintain the ecclesiastical revenues intact and inviolate to their original destination; or, on the other hand, admitting the right of parliament to interfere, hold, that for the benefit of subjects of this realm, for their religious instruction, for the well-being and harmony of society and the state, it may so interfere. But there is no resting-place

between the two propositions : to say that it should be partly distributed, and partly kept sacred—partly interfered with for public objects, and partly considered private property, does seem to me to couple, in one proposition, the utmost absurdity with the utmost inefficiency. Sir, I hope that honourable gentlemen opposite will grapple with this question on clear and intelligible grounds. I must protest against any proposition not founded in distinct and known principles, and which does not tend directly to the good of the state. But we are told, in defence of the present mode of applying Church property in Ireland—that the greatest number—fifteen to one—of the owners of the land in fee—are members of that Church. Sir, if I could fancy that any one would hold such a doctrine as this—that a church establishment was intended originally for the exclusive benefit of the rich—that spiritual instruction should only be given to men who had an estate of inheritance—that none but a man who possessed a freehold estate should be entitled to the comforts and consolations of religion—I could then understand the argument to which I have alluded; but when I refer to any of the great authorities I have quoted, who cannot be questioned or repudiated, and when I find it laid down that a church establishment was intended for the benefit of all classes, and more especially for the benefit, the instruction, and the consolation of the poor, it is not enough to tell me that those who originally contribute the sums which constitute the revenues of the church, are Protestants and members of that church—for I am bound to look at the effect of the payment of tithe on the whole as a system. Besides, on whomsoever the charge of maintaining the establishment may fall ultimately, it is perfectly notorious, that those on whom, for the most part, the tithe is levied, are members of the Roman Catholic faith.”

In conclusion, the noble lord moved—“That the House

do resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to consider the temporalities of the Church of Ireland." The debate lasted four nights; the resolution was opposed, not only by the ministerialists, but also by Sir James Graham, Lord Stanley, and several firm Whigs, such as Mr. Beilby Thompson. Sir Robert Peel concluded the debate, addressing the following warning to his probable successors in office:—"You may insist on your present resolution; you may succeed in forcing it upon us; I shall not have to wish you joy of your triumph. It may probably enable you to embarrass the future progress of the administration; it may be the token of approaching victory; but still do not be too confident. Let me, in the moment of your pride, in the buoyancy of your expectations, usurp the functions of that unpalatable, but not unfriendly office, which in former times was assigned to a slave, but which may be assumed by a freeman without derogation from his character. You boast that you exercise complete control over the government of the country; but let me whisper in your ear, that, though triumphant here, the power that you exercise does not act without these walls with that intensity with which it operates within. The duty I have voluntarily assumed, compels me to place before a triumphant conqueror, the vanity of human wishes, and the instability of mortal triumphs, but yet I must not shrink from it; and I tell you that, notwithstanding your vaunted majorities, you do not control public opinion. Yes, there is a public opinion, which exists independently of elective franchises, which votes cannot inspire, which majorities cannot control, but which is an essential instrument of the executive government. It will yield obedience to law; but if there be not confidence in the decisions of this House, law itself will lose half its authority. That public opinion will enforce on you the necessity of taking a direct and open course. The people of England

will not sanction attempts to throw unfair obstacles in the way of the executive government. They would sanction a direct vote of want of confidence, so far at least as to consider it a legitimate and constitutional act of hostility. Why have you not the manliness to propose it? Why do you implore me to undertake the settlement of this question upon your principles? You are confident in your strength: let me ask you, are you competent to undertake the government? If you are, undertake it. If you are not, why do you embarrass us? I will not enforce your resolution. I give you notice of the course that I mean to pursue. I shall oppose your motion for a committee; I shall oppose your resolution in committee; and above all things, and most strenuously, I shall oppose your communication of that resolution to his Majesty. I shall adhere to the principles of my own measure. Such is the necessity for the settlement of the tithe question, that it will admit of no further delay: I shall press it forward, and if you signify an intention of continuous opposition—if your determination to throw unusual impediments in the way of the government be plainly indicated,—if I find I shall not be able to proceed, with the immediate settlement of this question—I shall then acknowledge that the time has arrived when it will not be possible for me, consistent with my sense of the duty and the honour of a public man, to remain in the situation which I at present hold.” Lord John Russell’s motion for a committee was carried by a majority of thirty-three, in a House of more than six hundred members. On the 3rd of April, he proposed the following resolution in committee:—“That this House do resolve itself into a committee, in order to consider the present state of the Church Establishment in Ireland, with a view of applying any surplus of its revenues, not required for the spiritual care of its members, to the general education of all classes of the people, without distinc-

tion of religious persuasion." This was carried by a majority of twenty-five, in a House of five hundred members. Lord John Russell followed up his success, by proposing that the House should resolve, "that no measure upon the subject of tithes in Ireland can lead to a satisfactory and final adjustment, that did not embody the principle contained in the foregoing resolution."

The debate which ensued was principally remarkable for the excellent practical speech delivered by Mr. Sergeant Perrin, since elevated to the Irish bench. Sir Robert Peel spoke at great length, but not so effectively as in the preceding debate. He correctly anticipated a new defeat; the resolution was adopted by a majority of twenty-seven.

A principle having been thus adopted by the popular branch of the legislature, in which ministers could not advise the crown to concur, Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues resigned their places. The retiring premier announced this event to the House on the 8th of April, in one of the most impressive speeches he ever delivered, which we shall, therefore, insert at full length. He said—

"It is my intention to move that the Mutiny bill be read a third time; and in making that motion, I wish to avail myself of the opportunity it affords to notify to the House that I, and all my colleagues of his Majesty's government, in conjunction,—and in conformity with our unanimous opinion—have felt it incumbent upon us, on combined considerations of the vote which the House of Commons came to last night, and of the position in which, as a ministry, we find ourselves here, to signify to his Majesty, that, in our judgment, it was our duty to place the offices we hold, at his disposal. I do not hesitate to say that we have taken that course with the utmost reluctance, and not without the deepest conviction of its necessity; because we feel, that being in possession of the entire confidence of the King,

and having received from his Majesty the most cordial and unremitting support,—looking to the present state of public affairs,—to the present state of political parties,—and to the strength (not only the numerical, but the moral strength) of that great party by which we have had the honour of being supported, we felt it to be our duty, under existing circumstances, to continue the attempt of administering public affairs as the responsible advisers of the crown, to the latest moment that it was consistent with the interests of the public service, and with the honour of public men, to do so. When I do not hesitate to avow that reluctance, I believe I shall have credit with the great majority of the House, that it is connected only with public principle. I have a strong impression, that when a public man, at a crisis of great importance, takes upon himself the trust of administering the affairs of the government of this country, he does incur an obligation to persevere in the administration of those affairs as long as it is possible. I do feel that no indifference to public life—that no disgust at the labour it imposes—that no personal gratification—that no discordance of private feeling, would sanction a public man, on light grounds, in withdrawing from the post in which the favour of his sovereign has placed him. But, at the same time, there is an evil in exhibiting to the country a want, on the part of government, of that support in the House of Commons which will enable it, satisfactorily, to conduct the business of the nation, and to exercise a legitimate and necessary control over the proceedings of this House—a control conferred by the possession of the confidence of the House. I say, that there is an evil in that exhibition of weakness, to which limits must be placed; and reviewing all that has occurred since the commencement of the session,—looking at the little progress we have been able to make —(I presume from want of confidence and support as public

men)—looking at what has taken place, even within the four last nights,—seeing that we have had the misfortune to be in a minority upon each—on Thursday last, on Friday last, and on Monday last, and again last night;—considering that the minority was a minority of thirty, and that it was larger in relation to the minority, than the minority with which we commenced the session; adverting also, to the fact that, on this occasion, we received the assistance of those who, not having general and unlimited confidence in the government, have still given us, I must say, a cordial and honourable support on every occasion in which it was consistent with their public principle to give it;—adverting to all these considerations, in my opinion the time has arrived at which it is incumbent on us to withdraw from the responsibility which office, under such circumstances, imposes. In addition to these considerations, came the vote of last night—that vote, I conceive, implied a want of confidence in the government, because it was not necessary, in my opinion, for any public purpose, to come to that decision. It was tantamount to a declaration, that the House had not that confidence in the government which entitled it to permit that government to submit to consideration the measures of which it had given notice.

“The noble lord had signified his intention, that if the vote of last night should not lead to the result he anticipated, he would follow it up with an address to the crown. As I conceived that embarrassment of public affairs would proceed from the presentation of that address, and as I had no right to presume that the House would take a different view of the policy of the address than of the policy of the resolution,—it did appear incumbent upon myself, and my colleagues, whose views are in exact conformity with my own, as a part of our public duty, not to persevere in a useless struggle, which might involve his Majesty, and political par-

ties in the country, in additional and unnecessary difficulty. The vote of last night was not only tantamount to a declaration of want of confidence in the government, but it implied the necessity or demand for a total change of system in Ireland, so far as the church revenues are concerned. It would also, in my opinion, oppose such difficulties in the way of the practical administration of affairs in Ireland—in addition to its being a vote of want of confidence—that it made it next to impossible for us to undertake the execution of the law in Ireland; a majority—and a considerable majority—of the House of Commons having approved of a principle which was at direct variance with the principle to which we declared our adherence. The vote of last night was not on an abstract question; it was not one, the practical execution of which admits of delay. There may be points on which the House of Commons may come to a different conclusion from that of the government; it may do so on an abstract question, and that a question of great importance—but still such as to admit of postponement; and there may be cases where it would be possible for a government, even in opposition to the House of Commons, to conduct the administration of public affairs:—but you cannot leave the tithe question in its present state. The laws now in force for the collection of tithes are every day infringed; and while uncertainty prevails as to the future system, they cannot be enforced. Nothing can be more dangerous than to allow matters to remain in that condition: where there is a perpetual conflict in the execution of the law, property must be ultimately endangered unless the system be established, and the law enforced. Under these circumstances it would have been our duty, had we continued in office, to have pressed for an immediate decision on the Tithe bill. That Tithe bill we could not have presented to the House without previously proposing a resolution for a grant, or

rather a vote, for the remission of the claim for the repayment of the instalments under the Million act. I cannot say that I anticipated a different conclusion from that which was come to last night; I cannot think that the House of Commons would sanction the grant of £1,000,000 without a distinct understanding of the principle on which the Tithe bill was to rest. We therefore thought that the delay of a few days could make no material difference in our position, as it would be impossible to let the principle of the vote of last night lie dormant. If we had proceeded with the Tithe bill, the vote of last night was tantamount to a declaration that we should be obstructed in our progress. Being firmly resolved to adhere to the principle of that measure, whatever may be the difficulties of the times, and not to adopt the principle of the vote of last night;—on all these combined considerations, we have, as I said before, felt it to be a duty incumbent upon us, as public men invested with a public trust, respectfully to request his Majesty to permit us to retire. We, therefore, now hold our offices only for the execution of public business, and to prevent inconvenience, until his Majesty shall have had time to make other arrangements.

“Under these circumstances, I submit, that the best course will be for this House to make a short adjournment, but I should not propose it to extend beyond Monday next. I should have made the motion at once for an adjournment from to-night, were it not that a ballot for an election committee is fixed for to-morrow. Perhaps the House will think, in the present state of public affairs, that any discussion of important matters had better to be postponed. I have not the slightest doubt, from the consideration always shown to the crown under circumstances analogous to the present, that my proposal will meet with an almost unanimous, perhaps unanimous, acquiescence. To prevent

inconvenience to parties interested in the election committee, the ballot for which stands for to-morrow, the House will probably think it right to meet, and then consent—without any formal resolution brought forward to-night—to adjourn till Monday. I am confident, also, that the motion I am about to make, for the third reading of the Mutiny bill, with reference to considerations of the public interest, will be as cheerfully conceded to me by the House as the motion of adjournment. I wished to give this explanation as briefly as I could, and in the manner least calculated to produce any angry feelings. The whole of my political life has been spent in the House of Commons; the remainder of it will be spent here; and whatever may be the conflicts of parties, I, for one, shall always be anxious to stand well with the House, whether I be in a majority or in a minority. I do not hesitate to declare that, under no circumstances—under the pressure of no difficulties, would I ever have advised the crown to resign that great source of moral strength which consists in a strict adherence to the practice—to the principles—to the letter—and to the spirit of the constitution of this country. I am confident that that adherence will be the surest method of warding off eventful dangers. It is because I believe, in conformity with that constitution, a government ought not to persist in carrying on public affairs after a fair trial against the decided opinion of a majority of the House of Commons—it is because I have that conviction deeply rooted in my mind, that I have relinquished my post; although I do sincerely regret the necessity which has compelled me to abandon the King's service at the present moment. Yet, upon the balance of opposite interests, I believe I have taken that course which is more likely to maintain the character of a public man, and to promote the ultimate interests of the country, than the persevering in what I believe would be a fruitless attempt

to conduct public affairs in the face of an opposition, which has hitherto obstructed the satisfactory progress of the business of the nation."

This parting address was received with loud expressions of applause and esteem, from a very full House, and from all parties. Lord John Russell stated his conviction that the retiring minister had acted entirely in the spirit of the constitution. Never was there a defeat more honourable; brief as Sir Robert Peel's administration had been, it was, so far as he was personally concerned, one continued triumph, and there is no doubt that he could have preserved his power, with the general assent of the country, if he could have got rid of the unpopular associations of his party.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL OF THE PEEL ADMINISTRATION.

THE career of Sir Robert Peel as premier had been brief, but, so far as his own reputation was concerned, it had been signally triumphant. Opposed by a majority less formidable for its numerical strength than for its array of popularity and talent; supported by colleagues who, however useful from their habits of business, in their several offices, could afford but feeble aid in the struggle of debate, he shrunk not from the onerous task imposed upon him, and in every contest exhibited fresh resources of mental power, and varied skill in refuting assailants. Round him personally a large portion of the sympathies of the country had gathered; the unpopularity of his colleagues touched him not; he had the confidence of England, and, could he have controlled the zealots of his party, he would have won the confidence of Ireland. When it became probable that he would be driven to a resignation, addresses poured in upon him from all parts of the kingdom, many of them requesting him still to continue the struggle, and all expressing satisfaction with the mode in which he had conducted the government.

The Whigs were unfortunate in their selection of the question, on which they threw out Sir Robert Peel's ministry. It was evident that Peel's Tithe bill provided practical remedies for all the recognized evils of the Tithe system in Ireland. An abstract resolution for disposing of a surplus, when it was anything but certain that such a surplus would be found to exist, had nothing in it to excite popular enthu-

siasm, or foster popular confidence. In truth, the appropriation clause was generally disliked in England, and not very generally valued in Ireland. It was regarded by the English public as a concession to the Irish Catholic party, of which O'Connell was the head, and neither the principles nor the language of that party had served to conciliate favour. O'Connell's recent denunciations of the Whigs, and indeed, of the English people generally, had alienated from him those independent liberals who preferred principle to party. The suddenness with which he turned round to support the objects of his recent vituperation did not increase the public confidence in his character and consistency; indeed, on the whole, the alliance between O'Connell and the Whigs, however necessary, or however really justifiable in party tactics, was in many respects injurious to the character of both.

The difficulties of the Whigs began immediately. Earl Grey, when summoned by the King, refused to undertake the task of constructing an administration; and though his great age and infirmities furnished a sufficient excuse for his declining the heavy responsibilities of office, yet it was generally believed that a natural distaste for any alliance with the Irish members was the chief cause of his refusal. Lord Melbourne had, therefore, to re-construct his former cabinet, and at the same time to seek for new materials. His first perplexity arose from the Chancellorship; the King's objections to the return of Lord Brougham were insuperable; and, in sooth, few of his old colleagues were very anxious for the presence of that noble lord in the cabinet. But, however dangerous as an ally, he was still more formidable as an opponent; and how to keep him contented while excluded from office, was one of the most difficult problems that could be propounded to a statesman. His activity was so great, that it seemed almost a condition of his existence;

rather than sink into the position of what he had in other days, called "a dowager chancellor," he had offered to resign his pension for the office of Chief Baron of the Exchequer under the Peel ministry: he had shown some striking symptoms of exasperation when this offer was refused by political opponents,—what then was likely to be his feeling when he found himself neglected by those for whom he had laboured through life?

Earl Spencer, who, as Lord Althorp, had been the chief strength of Lord Melbourne's previous administration, refused to return to office. His tastes were always more in the direction of agricultural improvement than of political life. Experience had not tended to reconcile him to the toil and turmoil of office; he turned from statesmanship to farming, and could never again be induced to take any active share in directing the affairs of the country.

For some unknown reason, Lord Melbourne found himself unable to avail himself of the practised statesmanship of the Marquis of Wellesley. Though far advanced in age, the light of the marquis's brilliant intellect was undimmed; he united the vigour and courage of youth to the disciplined experience acquired in a long course of public services. Twice he had administered vice-regal authority in Ireland, and on both occasions had exhibited a union of firmness and forbearance unfortunately too rare in the annals of that unhappy country. The reasons for passing him over are not known; that they were of so painful a nature as to render their communication a matter of delicacy and difficulty, appears from the fact that the Marquis of Wellesley first learned the appointment of Earl Mulgrave to the government of Ireland, from overhearing the conversation of the door-keepers in the House of Lords. It may also be presumed that the reasons were not quite satisfactory to the noble marquis himself, for, having accepted the office of



THE RT HON^{BLE} JOHN CHARLES SPENCER,
EARL SPENCER.

*Yours most truly,
Spencer*

Chamberlain, he resigned it after a very short tenure, and almost wholly withdrew himself from public life.

To these disadvantageous circumstances, Lord Melbourne feelingly alluded, when announcing the formation of the new ministry on the 18th of April in the House of Lords. After having stated formally his acceptance of office, he continued—

“With regard to the difficulties under which the new administration has been formed (and great and many those difficulties have been—some of them, indeed, of a peculiarly severe and mortifying nature),—it is not now my intention to say anything, nor will I enter into a discussion on the subject to which they would lead me; neither, in fact, can it be necessary for me to say more of the principles on which that administration has been constructed, than that they are the same principles on which the former government,—of which I had the honour to be at the head,—was based; principles which—to a great extent—have been recognized, confirmed, and strengthened by those who succeeded me and my colleagues in office. They are principles—(give me leave to say, my Lords,)—of safe, and prudent, and truly efficient reform,—principles, the tendency of which is not to subvert or endanger, but, on the contrary, to improve, and strengthen, and establish the institutions of the country. As to those particular subjects which have so lately engrossed the attention of parliament, and which have been alluded to by some noble lords on the other side of the House—(I advert to those questions, especially, of an administrative character, which relate to ecclesiastical government)—I beg to be allowed to assure your lordships, and through your lordships to assure the country, that every measure contemplated in reference to that subject will have for its end and purpose the promotion and increase of true piety and religion throughout the whole and every part of his Majesty’s dominions.”

A strange scene, ominous of future difficulty, occurred, when Lord Alvanley assailed the ministry for having entered into some compact with O'Connell and the Repealers. After having read some extracts from the most rabid of O'Connell's Repeal speeches, Lord Alvanley made a personal appeal to Lord Melbourne, in the following energetic terms:—

“ I call upon my noble friend opposite, first as an English gentleman, to state to the people of England, the terms on which he stands with a man, who has solemnly pledged himself never to rest till he has procured the repeal of the Union—a measure which must infallibly lead to the dismemberment of the empire;—and next, as a peer of parliament and a member of this House, to say how far he coincides with Mr. O'Connell's declared wish and intention of reducing this free, independent, and hereditary branch of the British legislature to the humbled condition of an elective senate ?”

Lord Brougham, whose interference was perfectly gratuitous, as he was unconnected with the ministry, in an excited manner interrupted the speaker, saying:—“ I rise to order. I can see no reason why,—

Lord Alvanley replied:—“ I did not put the question to the noble and learned lord.”

Lord Brougham, still more excited, exclaimed:—“ And that is the very reason why I rose to notice it, it is—”

Several noble lords shouted—“ order ! order !”

Lord Kenyon said:—“ The noble and learned lord has risen to order; I rise to speak to the same question. The noble and learned lord rose to call my noble friend (Lord Alvanley) to order after he had concluded his speech. I ask your lordships whether it is not the noble and learned lord himself, and not my noble friend, who is out of order ?”

Lord Brougham, with unceasing vehemence, added:—
“ Most unquestionably I rose to order, and according to

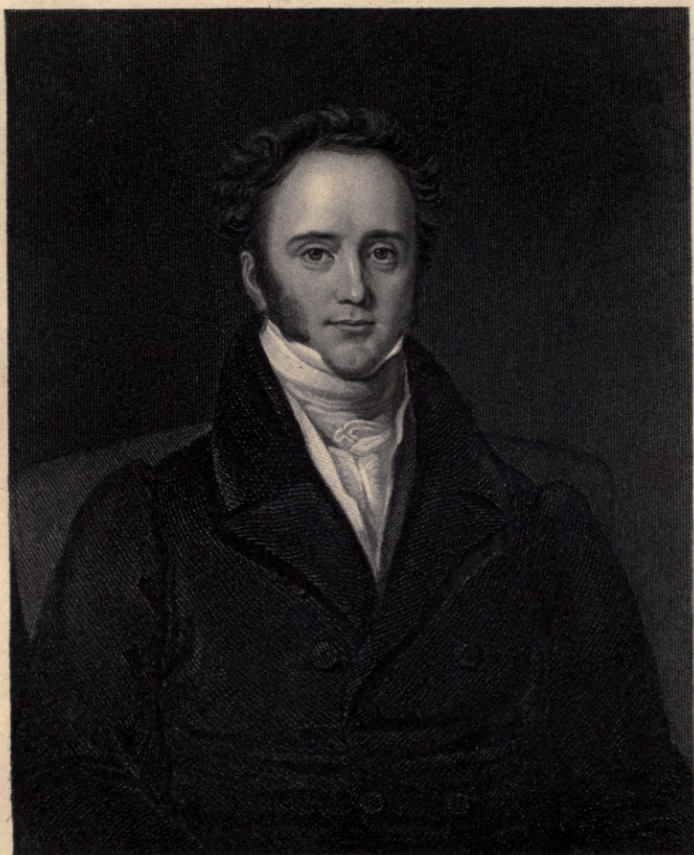
the strictest forms of order, I am correct in speaking to that question. How did the noble baron (Lord Kenyon) know, that I did not mean to ground a motion upon the disorderly course taken by my noble friend (Lord Alvanley)? I had risen, in the first instance, to stop my noble friend opposite, on the ground that the question he was putting was out of order. My noble friend then gets up and says, he has done; and then, as a necessary consequence, there is no longer any interruption of my noble friend's speech; but I crave permission of my noble friend near me (Viscount Melbourne) to entreat him not to answer the question; which, for irregularity, is unparalleled in either House of Parliament. The *Gazette* will show who are in place, and the measures will show what will be the conduct of the government. But, my lords, did any one ever hear of a minister of the crown being called upon to tell whom the king meant to appoint to office, or as to what arrangements may be in progress, or have been made with a certain individual, and whether that individual has been gained over by the government? My noble friend will take his own course, but I humbly and respectfully advise him not to sanction the putting of such questions, by giving them an answer."

The Earl of Wicklow observed—"I contend that in putting the question which has been objected to, my noble friend was not out of order. Whether it was a judicious question or not, is another matter; but it was not one that was out of order: on the other hand, the noble and learned lord, rising in that unprecedented manner to call the noble baron (Lord Alvanley) to order, was, in itself, a most disorderly proceeding."

Lord Melbourne, who was manifestly more mortified by Brougham's volunteering to speak in the name of the ministry, than by anything which had fallen from Lord Alvanley, in tones of marked firmness, and in a manner

more than usually animated, thus answered the question to which his former colleague had recommended him to make no reply :—

“ Perhaps my noble friend was not greatly out of order, in putting the question that he addressed to me ; but, at the same time, I think my noble friend might have couched it in plainer terms, and not accompanied it with a long speech, which he made the vehicle for observations that are extremely unusual on putting a question of this nature. In the first place, my noble friend asks me how far I concur in opinion with Mr. O’Connell? Why, my lords, my simple answer is—not at all ! It is impossible that any question can receive a more direct answer than that. My noble friend then asks whether I now entertain the same opinions as those which I avowed on a former occasion—referring, I suppose, to the time when the bill, called the Irish Coercion bill, was under consideration ? My answer to my noble friend is, that I do entertain the same opinions, and persevere in them. My noble friend desires to know, in the next place, whether I have taken any means to secure the assistance of Mr. O’Connell, and upon what terms ? I reply, that I do not know whether I shall have the assistance of Mr. O’Connell or not ; but I can state, distinctly, that I have hitherto taken no steps to secure it. I wish, moreover, most particularly to state, that I have entered into no terms whatever, nor have I said anything from which any inference to such an effect can be drawn, in order to secure that honourable gentleman’s support. To my noble friend’s question, therefore, I give the most decided negative ; and if my noble friend has been told anything to the contrary, he has been told that which is false, and without foundation. There is nothing, I can assure your lordships, either in the direct statement of my noble friend, or that can be drawn by implication from what my noble friend



Painted by J. Lucas.

Engraved by H. Cook.

THE 1ST HON^{BLE} HENRY JOHN TEMPLE, LORD VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, G.C.B.

Palmerston



has this day stated with relation to all these matters—which is supported by the facts of the case.

Lord Alvanley thus concluded this interlude—"If I have been out of order, I am happy at the circumstance ; because I have, in consequence, received a most satisfactory answer from my noble friend, therefore I do not regret that I put the question ; and I cannot conceive that I deserved the rebuke of my noble and learned friend who sits below him."

The elections rendered necessary by the new ministerial changes, were in some cases very discouraging to the Melbourne cabinet. Lord John Russell was defeated by a large majority in the southern division of Devonshire, in spite of the large property and great influence possessed by his family in that county. He was therefore unable to procure a seat until after parliament had re-assembled, when Colonel Fox, member for Stroud, vacated that borough in his favour, and became Secretary of the Ordnance. By a similar negotiation, Mr. Kennedy, member for Tiverton, made room for Lord Palmerston, who was reluctant to face his former constituency. The vacancy occasioned in the county of Stafford by Mr. Littleton's elevation to the peerage under the title of Lord Hatherton, was supplied by a Conservative, and a similar result took place in the Scotch county of Inverness, when Mr. Charles Grant vacated his seat by becoming Lord Glenelg. There was but one great victory, to counterbalance these defeats ; Lord Morpeth was vigorously opposed in the West Riding of Yorkshire, but carried his re-election by a great majority.

While O'Connell by past actions damaged the ministry in England, his proceedings in Ireland threatened them with still more dangerous results. He so arranged matters, that the procession which accompanied Lord Mulgrave on his entrance into Dublin, should be a most offensive display

of O'Connellite force and triumph. So gross were the proceedings, that the Earl of Wicklow, a nobleman of moderate Conservative politics, with decided liberal tendencies, found it necessary to bring the matter under the consideration of the House of Lords.

The connection of O'Connell with the Whigs being the chief reason why such strenuous exertions were made by many who had been leading liberals, to restore Sir Robert Peel to office, as a minister who was able to control and baffle the dangerous agitator, renders it necessary to give more prominent notice of his proceedings than their importance would otherwise merit. We insert Lord Wicklow's speech entire, because the moderation of its tone sufficiently proves that he was not induced by any factious motives to search out causes of grievance, and to magnify petty incidents for the purpose of annoying political adversaries. It shows that he spoke "more in sorrow than in anger," when he censured a display not less injurious to the liberal party generally, than dangerous to the peace of the community. The Earl of Wicklow said—

"Seeing the noble viscount at the head of his Majesty's government in his place, I am anxious to put a question to him on a subject of very great importance; and I beg to say I do so without any feeling of hostility. On the contrary—after the declarations made by him on a recent occasion—it will be my wish to abstain from any demonstration of such a description, until I have an opportunity of seeing and judging how those declarations are followed up, and what will be the acts of the noble viscount and his colleagues. But circumstances have lately occurred in Ireland, which make me feel that it would be a dereliction of my duty, if I were to suffer them to pass over without notice—I refer to the manner in which the noble earl, recently appointed lord-lieutenant, has made his entry into Dublin. I wish not to be misunder-

stood. I do not disapprove of demonstrations of regard, on the entry of a favoured lord-lieutenant into that city. I should be the last man in the world who could disapprove of the expression of regret, such as that which was shown by the Irish people at the departure of my noble friend near me (the Earl of Haddington)—and, therefore, I cannot but approve of the demonstration of feeling; and as I know how well merited it was, I should not be justified, in principle, in disapproving of another demonstration, though of a different kind, upon the arrival of the noble earl who has recently been appointed to the office of lord-lieutenant.*

But, if the reports I have heard are true, the demonstrations made on the arrival of the noble earl, were of a totally different kind from those made on the departure of my noble friend. I am informed that the *cortége* which took place on the occasion of the noble earl's entry into Dublin, was the organized arrangement of an individual of great power in Ireland. The men in the procession were marshalled by appointed leaders—they assembled in great numbers, in consequence of orders issued in the Roman Catholic chapels of the neighbourhood, that they should so assemble and take part in the procession. Under these circumstances, it seems to me that the procession was in direct violation of the laws of the country. It was not only in violation of the common law, but of that law which was introduced two years ago, when the noble viscount opposite was Secretary of State for the Home Department. I allude to the bill which was to be continued for five years, and which declared all bodies of men assembled with symbols and banners of party to be illegal. If the reports I have heard are true, the noble earl

“Lord Wicklow was misinformed; the procession, which escorted Lord Haddington on his departure, was not wholly unobjectionable, for there were some offensive manifestations of Orange feeling; but it was certainly nothing like so wanton and insulting as the display which greeted the arrival of the Earl of Mulgrave.

permitted that to be done, which renders him incapable of holding the sword of justice with an impartial hand in that country ; for what he has done is prohibited by law ; and how can he prohibit that in others which he has allowed to be done in his own case, and in acquiescing in which, he has committed so direct a violation of the law ? These circumstances must have a tendency to discourage the loyal and well-affected in that country ; and they cannot but be confirmed in their apprehensions, when they see the lord-lieutenant thus lend himself to the party which is most dangerous in that kingdom, and which has often been denounced, not only in parliament, but even in speeches from the Throne. Another circumstance is also recorded to have taken place, which, if true, is of considerable importance. I understand that the Solicitor-General for Ireland has, at a public dinner, sanctioned a toast, having for its object a speedy repeal of the Union. Coupling this with the circumstance of banners having been carried in the procession to which I have adverted, inscribed with "Repeal of the Union," "No Tithes," and "O'Connell for Ever," the whole proceeding appears to me to be of an alarming character ; and I hope that the noble viscount will take the opportunity which I have thus given him, to set the minds of the people at rest on this subject. The question, therefore, which I beg to put to him is : first, whether the noble viscount has received any authentic information that the noble earl entered Dublin in the manner which I have described ; and, secondly, if so—what steps have been taken by the government to announce to the lord-lieutenant its disapprobation of such proceedings ?"

Lord Melbourne replied, that he was not aware that the procession had been of the offensive character described, and expressed his confident belief that no such proceedings would be countenanced by the Earl of Mulgrave.—But whether countenanced or not, the event had a marked and unfor-

fortunate influence over the whole of that nobleman's administration in Ireland. It led the Irish to believe that their new governor was fond of that theatrical pomp of popular display to which they are themselves far too devotedly attached, and it alienated from him the liberal Protestants, who had been too ungratefully and too harshly treated by O'Connell, to see him act so ostentatiously the part of "viceroy over the viceroy," with patience or indifference.

Sir Robert Peel's ministry had been in a minority in the House of Commons—Lord Melbourne's administration had only a narrow majority, and even that was exposed to diminution from the chances of elections. The elections consequent on the ministerial changes had shown that such contingencies were likely to be more favourable to their adversaries than themselves, and hence they were obliged to adopt a cautious course of policy, and to abstain from opposing measures likely to alarm the fears of the timid portion of their supporters. Such caution necessarily exposed them to the reproaches of the more ardent radicals; in their journals and speeches, the leaders of this party began to complain that, after all, there was but little difference between Whigs and Tories, and that if a change of ministry only produced such miserable results, it was hardly worth while to have turned out Sir Robert Peel. On an incidental question respecting Church-rates, Lord John Russell damped the ardour of many of his followers, by declaring in favour of a slow and cautious policy, in consistency with which the settlement of Church-rates would be deferred to another session. "Sir," said he, "there is something further, which I have to state, with respect to bringing forward this question during the present session, and I will state it as plainly as I can to the House, without arguing the propriety of what I have to say, but leaving it to the judgment of honourable members to decide upon it as shall seem to them fitting. His Majesty's

present ministers have resolved to undertake, during the present session, to propose to parliament a question of very great magnitude and of very great extent, and, I must add, of very great detail—with respect to municipal corporations. They have likewise undertaken and resolved to bring forward in the course of no very long time, a question regarding not only tithes in Ireland, but carrying into effect a resolution of this House, which I had the honour to move before the adjournment. Now, if I have gained anything from the experience of the last three years, during which I was in the government, it is this :—a conviction that we frequently fall into difficulties by undertaking too great a multiplicity of business at once, and that, although we were enabled to pass some very great questions, and although in the course of the last four years we were enabled to propose and carry measures through parliament, exceeding in importance and in magnitude any questions that in a similar period of time were ever proposed and carried in parliament by any government ; yet at the same time there were various other questions that occupied our consideration, and which were brought before parliament, which, at the end of the session, in the month of August, we find ourselves unable to carry forward, from want of time to give them due consideration. Therefore, ready as I am, to consider any of those questions which were brought into the House by the late government—ready as I am to entertain and discuss any question which any honourable member may introduce—yet I am not prepared, so far as the government is concerned, to pledge that government to undertake any question further than these two—municipal reform in England and Wales, and the reform of the Church of Ireland, including the settlement of the tithe question. I will not undertake during the present session to bring forward any measure with regard to Church-rates. It is a question upon which my opinions are well known, and one

which I would readily bring forward, in order to consult the interests of the Dissenters, as well as the interests of the Established Church, but at this time I cannot do so; and I wish the honourable member for Middlesex (Mr. Hume) clearly to understand the grounds on which it is that I will not pledge his Majesty's government to bring that question before the legislature during the present session. I shall always be happy to consult with the Dissenters upon any subject which they consider a grievance, with a view to their relief in all cases of well-grounded complaint."

Sir Robert Peel eagerly seized the opportunity of damaging the new ministry, which this honest declaration of future policy, and manly confession of past error, afforded. After having elaborately stated the past history of the church-rate controversy, he thus continued:—

"This is a practical question, which requires immediate settlement; and let me tell the noble lord, that he is under a peculiar obligation to advance the settlement of this question. You may refer to the conduct of these churchwardens, and to the unwillingness of persons to pay church-rates; but they will refer you to your own act of parliament brought in by your own government, in the year 1834, which asserts the necessity of abolishing church-rates, and of providing a remedy for the evils arising out of their existence. Can you be surprised at the dissatisfaction with which church-rates are paid? Can you be surprised at the embarrassments in which churchwardens are involved, in the collection of such rates, if government bring in a measure denouncing the system, and which was carried by a majority of 256 to 140, in April, 1834; and if when June, 1835, is approaching, the government come down and say, 'Although our principles on this question remain the same, yet we are not prepared to propose a practical settlement of it.' I can see no ground, if the noble lord adheres

to his principle, upon which he can decline to bring forward the practical result this session. I will suggest to him that there are important matters to be considered, before the question can be settled, which were not considered by Lord Althorp. The debt, on account of church-rates, turned out, upon inquiry, to be much larger than Lord Althorp supposed, when he brought in his bill, and thus confirmed the statement of the noble lord opposite, that, notwithstanding the great triumphs of the noble lord's government, their attempts at legislation were not always well matured.

"I am always glad, when I can, to produce a practical proof in support of the arguments of a minister of the crown; and this affords one proof that sometimes the noble lord and his colleagues did proceed somewhat too hastily, and that reasonable men might well believe that a slower progress in legislation, accompanied with more mature consideration and delay, might have answered the object of good policy better than extreme rapidity in bringing forward measures, and an equal rapidity in abandoning them. Lord Althorp said he would vote £250,000, out of which was to be paid a debt of £80,000, in consequence of the church-rate having been mortgaged to that amount. But I called for a return of the real amount for which the rates were mortgaged, and certainly I was surprised to find, that, instead of £80,000 it was £827,000. The noble lord will find I am not wrong; and as I have, in order to encourage the noble lord, delivered into his hands the Dissenters' Marriage bill, I will, with equal satisfaction, and to enable him to give practical effect to his principles, furnish him with all the *data* I have, that tend to demonstrate the existence of this debt. With respect to the reform of municipal corporations, I was about to say a word upon that subject, but I fear I shall be called to order. Without understanding the importance of that measure, yet, as far as

public order is concerned—as far as giving satisfaction to Dissenters is concerned,—and as far as removing from the statute books laws open to objection, and difficult to enforce,—difficult because the government has pronounced an intention to abolish them—is concerned,—I will say that there is not one question of greater importance in its practical consequences; not one, excepting the question of the Irish church, which so much presses for a practical settlement, as this question of church-rates. I must confess, that I thought that one of the grounds upon which I had been dismissed from office was, that my accession to power had a tendency to interrupt several practical measures, actually under mature consideration, and which were nipped in the bud by that unfortunate frost which took place about the 9th of November last. It was put upon record, in the most formal and solemn manner, by his Majesty's faithful Commons, in the amendment to the address, that—‘They beg leave submissively to add, that they cannot but lament that the progress of these and other reforms should have been interrupted and endangered by the unnecessary dissolution of parliament, earnestly intent upon the vigorous prosecution of measures, to which the wishes of the people were most anxiously and justly directed.’ Why, then, if you had asked me, upon the most solemn obligation, to what more particular measures, in addition to corporation reform, that amendment had especial reference, I should have answered—‘You must mean a commutation of tithes, and the abolition of church-rates; because these were the two measures upon which the late parliament was most particularly and most earnestly intent.’ I will add one other measure—the Dissenters’ Marriage bill. These are the three measures which it was said I had interrupted by advising the dissolution of parliament. What, I ask, is to happen with respect to the commutation of tithes? That,

I understand, is to remain over ; the Dissenters' Marriage bill is postponed for three weeks ; and a declaration has been made by an especial authority, to whom the noble lord referred,—I mean the honourable and learned member for the Tower Hamlets,—that you must not touch this measure individually, but you must consider its bearing upon the church-rates, upon the system of registration, and upon commutation of tithes, and all other matters connected with the establishment ; and then will follow a large philosophical measure founded upon principles which will give universal satisfaction. If in the speech from the throne,—if I had said, do not legislate partially,—do nothing until you can provide for every interest, temporal and spiritual,—do not touch one subject till all are provided for ;—then, indeed, you might have had reason for declaring, in an amendment, that the dissolution of parliament had interfered with the progress of good measures.

“ Sir, there can be no question, if his Majesty's late government, in the month of November, had turned their attention to the question of a commutation of tithes and of church-rates, they might have been prepared to have brought them forward this session. But although the noble lord has announced the principle that tithes ought to be commuted, still, as in the case of church-rates, he has intimated, that that question will not be settled this present session. The noble lord ought not to have made that declaration until he was prepared to follow it up by giving it practical effect. To make such announcements of principles before you are prepared to act upon them, tends only to increase the dissatisfaction of the people with the existing laws, and to impede the progress of those arrangements between individuals, which might supersede the necessity of an alteration of the law upon amicable grounds. But upon the subject of church-rates, surely the noble lord—

adhering to his principle, and getting possession of all the facts necessary to enable him to act upon that principle—surely, of whatever importance corporation reform may be, or of whatever importance (and I admit its importance) the immediate settlement of the Irish church question may be, the noble lord and his colleagues have been parties to that bill which denounces the existence of church-rates; and, on reflection, still retaining their opinions upon the great principle it involves, and being enabled to execute that principle by the simplest possible measure—namely, by a mere vote of £25,000,—surely the noble lord, in consideration of the interests of the Established Church—in consideration of the satisfaction of the people of this country—and in consideration of maintaining obedience and subordination to the law, and effecting the supercession of individual complaints against particular grievances, like those we have heard to-night—surely an executive government fit to be intrusted with the administration of the affairs of this great country, will feel that this question ought not to be left to the discussion of parish vestries, or to be made the subject of resistance by parochial martyrs, for another year.”

The leaders of the Dissenters, however, had not forgotten the great obligations which their body owed to Lord John Russell for his consistent support of the principles of civil and religious liberty. They avowed unabated confidence in the government, and expressed their readiness to wait until a suitable measure for their relief could be matured and prepared.

The discussions on agricultural distress and the currency were renewed this session, and the arguments of those who sought a depreciation of the standard were directed more against Sir Robert Peel than the existing ministers. His defence of the course of policy he had recommended in

1819 was singularly effective, and though we have more than once extracted largely from his speeches on the subject, yet it is one of such vast importance, that we must add the exposition given on Mr. Cayley's motion for the adoption of a double standard, because it is one of the clearest applications of the principles of economic science to a monetary system with which we are acquainted. Having shown that silver was even more liable to fluctuation than gold, Sir Robert Peel thus continued:—

“Those who are the most opposed to the principle of the act of 1819, should be the persons least sanguine in their expectations of great benefits to be derived from the substitution at present of a silver, for a gold standard. If silver be substituted for gold, as a standard, there must be, according to their doctrines, a material rise in the price of silver. Gold being no longer required for coin, might leave the country, and might be depreciated in value,—for England would not then want the millions of gold which are now necessary for its circulation. Silver, on the other hand, being wanted, instead of gold, having been substituted as the standard—as the sole legal tender—England would appear in the market as a purchaser of silver, which would, therefore, be more in demand, and would, consequently, rise in price. If this should be the case to any extent whatever, where would be the relief, to the debtor or mortgager, from an alteration in the standard? It may be said that there is a greater probability that silver will fall in value, on account of increased production from the mines, than that gold will. I doubt, however, whether a reference to the productiveness of mines, would not prove that gold has been of late years produced, relatively, in much greater quantities than silver. If honourable members will consult the works of Baron Humboldt,—if they will advert to the returns, imperfect as they must be,

obtained from our consuls and diplomatic agents in South America—if they will look at the statements contained in Mr. Jacob's work,—they will probably see reason to doubt whether gold is not now produced, taking into account the new supply from North America, from Russia, and from Siberia, in larger quantities, relatively to silver, than it has been heretofore. I doubt whether the honourable member,—if he were to attain his object of introducing, not a conjoint, but a silver standard, singly, at the present rate of silver,—would not find that his efforts had been productive of more harm than good to the interests which he hopes to serve; and whether he would not, ere long, be awakened to the conviction that he had made a worse bargain for those of the agriculturists who are suffering from debts and incumbrances, than that which exists at present. So much for alteration of the standard of value, unconnected with depreciation.

“ Now, let us consider it in connection with depreciation. By depreciating the standard, the prices of all commodities would be raised ;—the agriculturist would receive a greater price for the corn which he has to sell, but he will also have to pay a greater price for all the articles which he has to purchase for himself and his family ; and thus, the apparent and nominal advantages which he would reap as a seller, will be counterbalanced by the greater prices which he will be obliged to pay as a purchaser. There is, however, one point in which he would undoubtedly be a gainer at first from the depreciation of the currency. The rate of labour would, for a time—perhaps a considerable time—be lower ; but in that case who would be the sufferer ? who but the agricultural labourer ? I say, the sufferer by the depreciation of the currency is sure to be the labourer. The rate of wages would not be increased simultaneously with the reduced value of money. I know

the argument that is used with regard to the general prosperity which is to revisit the land, and the demand for labour which would be the consequence of it:—I know that the advocates of depreciation attempt to supply the deficiency of their arguments by the magnificence of their prophecies; but the truth is, the price of labour does not vary so rapidly as the price of commodities; and depend upon it, that the first and chief sufferer by depreciation of the currency is he who is supported by the wages of manual labour. All, then, that the agriculturist would gain from depreciating the standard would be the amount of his savings by defrauding the public creditor, and pinching the agricultural labourer. ‘But,’ said the honourable gentleman, ‘the agricultural interest has a claim to the advantages which may arise from depreciating the currency, and from diminishing the pressure of the public burdens; because the members of it contracted their debts in one currency, and are now called upon to pay them in another.’

“Much has been said of the injustice done to those who, having made their engagements in a depreciated, were called upon to fulfil them in an improved currency; and no doubt there has been hardship in peculiar cases: but was it possible to devise any just scheme of adjustment? It clearly is not fair to take one period only into account, or one class of sufferers from fluctuations in the value of the currency. If there is to be an attempt at the equitable adjustment of contracts, it must be a very comprehensive principle, and extend over a very long period. We hear much of the injustice inflicted on the man who, having borrowed money during the period of depreciated currency, has been called upon to repay it in one of increased value. But what say you to the case of those who, having lent money previously to the year 1797—that is, previously to the suspension of cash payments—were compelled to receive their principal or

their interest in that very currency, the depreciation of which is said to have been so great? Were not they, at least, as great sufferers as the others?—and can you open one of these accounts for equitable adjustment, and close the other? The question is—‘Can justice be done, now, by altering the arrangement to which parliament came in the year 1819?’ In 1819? No; I have already said that that arrangement was decided on by parliament in the year 1816. I repeat, that the arrangement was, in reality, made in 1816. I do not mean that cash payments were legally established in 1816; but I mean that, owing to natural causes, in consequence of the return of peace—the cessation of the stimulus of war—the free intercourse in all commodities—and the improvement in machinery, common to all manufacturing countries—that reduction of prices, and that contraction of currency, took place in 1816, which are attributed almost exclusively to the act of 1819. It is necessary to separate the operation of that bill from these effects, which were produced by the natural causes which I have enumerated, and by the engagement into which parliament had entered, to revert to cash payments on the conclusion of peace. Nineteen years have now elapsed since 1816, and, with trifling exceptions, all contracts now in existence were formed under the existing system of currency, and in full confidence that this system would be continued. Those who formed them had not only the faith of ordinary law to depend on, but had also the knowledge that repeated attempts were made in this House to obtain an alteration of that law, and were as repeatedly resisted and refused. The act for the actual resumption of cash payments passed in 1819.

“In 1821 the House came to a solemn resolution, that it would not consent to any alteration in the standard. In 1826 it repeated that declaration; and again in 1833.

What justice, then, I ask, would there be in now depreciating the standard, and in making all contracts formed since 1819 conform to a depreciated currency? So far from redressing any injustice inflicted by former fluctuations, how many parties are there who would be double sufferers—who have closed the transactions who have paid the debts in respect to which the former hardship was sustained—and have entered into new contracts, by the derangement of which they would again suffer! How small a portion of the contracts formed before 1816 remain now unfulfilled, compared with the number which have been formed since! In how many cases, to which law did not reach—leases, for instance, and contracts for fixed payments—has compensation been made by voluntary compacts between the parties! What injustice would you not inflict on those who have entered into contracts on the faith of your acts and of your resolutions, solemnly made, and as solemnly reiterated, if you now compel the derangement of them, by depreciating the currency in which they were formed! For these considerations, and without troubling the House by the introduction of extraneous topics—believing that the agriculturists have no real interest in the proposition, apart from a depreciation of the currency, and thereby robbing the public creditor—and feeling it to be inconsistent with the honour and integrity of the House of Commons to lend itself to any measure that would have that result—I shall not permit the pretext of a vague inquiry into agricultural distress to blind me as to the real objects of this proposition, which is neither more nor less than, through a depreciation of the standard, to seek a relief which would not, I believe, be effectual; and which, if effectual, would, I am sure, be dishonest.”

Thus, Sir Robert Peel’s responsibility was to some extent continued even after he had retired from office; instead of being a disadvantage, this had the effect of keeping him

before the public, as the greatest living authority in financial affairs, and the chief obstacle to an injurious change in the currency, which would severely injure creditors, without yielding any corresponding advantage to debtors.

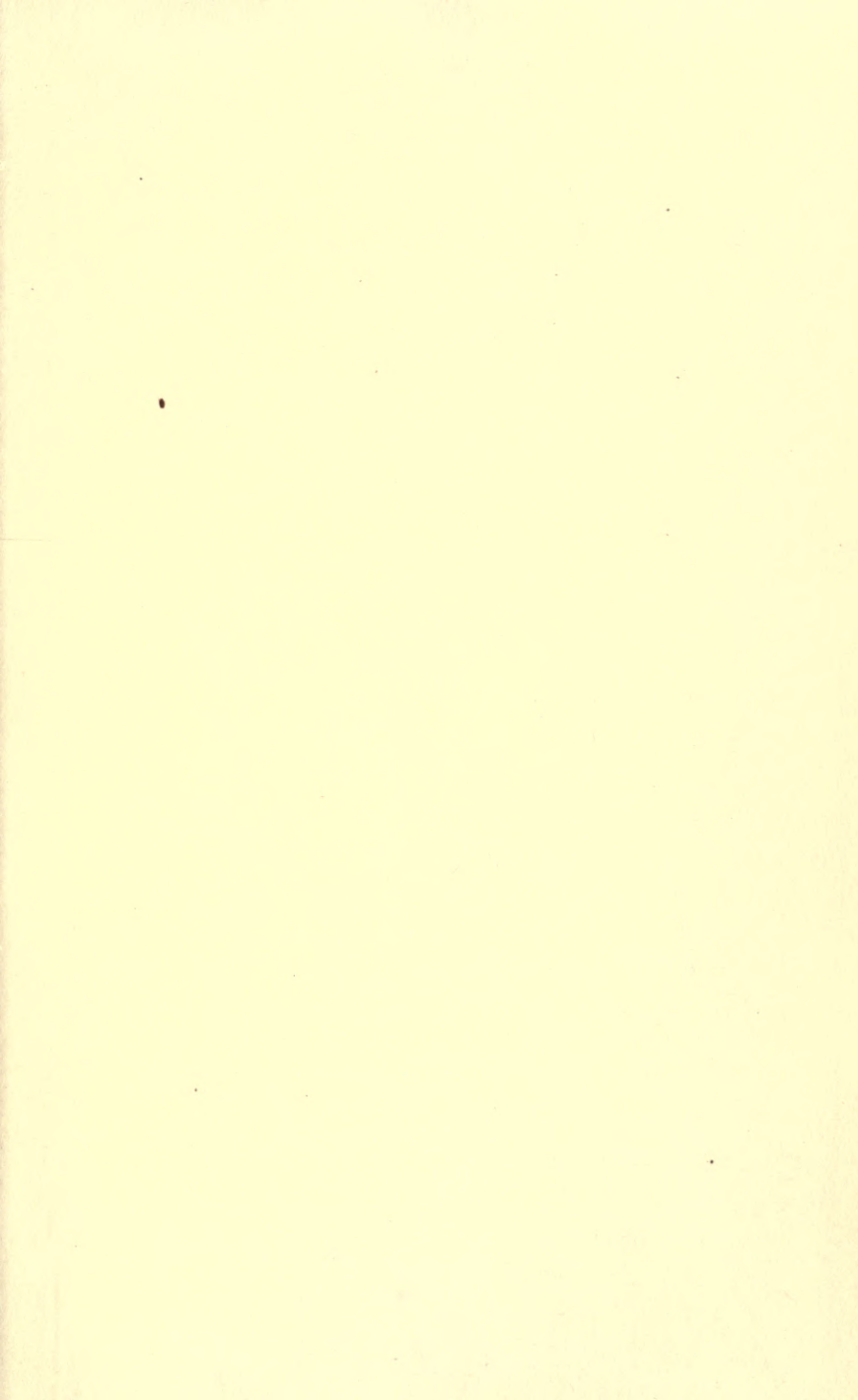
These debates on the currency proved fatal to a most remarkable man, who had predicted utter ruin to the country from the adoption of Peel's bill, and had, as mentioned in the preceding volume, actually proposed the impeachment of its author ; we mean, William Cobbett. This powerful and popular writer was one of the many who supposed that parliament would open a wide field for the exercise of his varied talents, and that the abilities which had sufficed to guide a mob would be equally sufficient to direct a senate. But in parliament he quite broke down, and his failure there greatly weakened the influence which he had previously acquired as a public writer. Few authors have been so varied, so voluminous, and so popular, and yet in a few weeks after his death he was as completely forgotten as if he had never existed. His removal at this period, however, was advantageous to Sir Robert Peel, for there were many whom long habit had accustomed to take their opinions from Cobbett's Register, and who, when set free to think for themselves, gradually came round to the sound principles of metallic currency and convertible paper.

We have now reached what may be considered the second great stage in the life of Sir Robert Peel. As a minister he had identified himself with liberal and progressive policy, but at the same time he had renewed his party connections with the most illiberal opponents of every innovation and improvement, which the advancing spirit of the age required. To this inconsistency between his avowed policy and his recognized party must be attributed the insurmountable difficulties which he had to encounter as a minister, and which were immensely increased when he again became leader of an

opposition. His sympathies were for the most part with his political opponents, but he was forced to check his natural impulses and generous feelings through fear of displeasing his violent supporters. Such a position was both painful and unpopular; but the same old associations, which had prevented him from coalescing with the Whigs in 1829, had not lost their power in 1836, yet he found it impossible to persuade the world that there was any essential difference between the new Conservative and the old Tory.

END OF VOL. II.





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